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Dr Strangefate

Spider-Man and Superboy merge as...

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NEWS · AMERICA ·

Marvel and DC merge for a week

ACCESS is a new superhero jointly created by DC and Marvel Comics introduced in **Marvel vs DC** #3, shipping February. He will be the catalyst for 12 one-shot titles produced by and shipping from both companies on February 27, all retailing for $1.95.

All Marvel and DC mainstream titles are, for just one week, being replaced by the one-shots. Under the banner of Amalgam Comics, both companies are producing new characters — merged versions of their most prominent heroes and villains.

Introducing Access, a new hero who has been co-created by Marvel and DC, initially to restore order between the DC and the Marvel Universe in the final part of ***DC versus Marvel****. Access also proves to be the catalyst for the jointly published Amalgam Comics.* *Artwork by Claudio Castellini*

From Marvel

Bruce Wayne: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D

Bruce Wayne / Nick Fury: Driven by the death of his parents, billionaire Bruce Wayne forges a top espionage strike force and attempts to stop the Green Skull attempting world domination. Script by Chuck Dixon and art by Cary Nord.

Spider-Boy

Superboy / Spider-Man: A teenage wall-crawling superstar is pursued across New York by the gigantic King Lizard and Bizarnage, by Karl Kesel and Mike (**Robin**) Wieringo.

Magneto & The Magnetic Men

Magneto / Metal Men: Magneto watched in horror as his Brotherhood of Evil Mutants were slaughtered. Now utilising new technology he constructs five robots from different metals to protect his fellow mutants. The one-shot is by Mark Waid and drawn by Jeff Matsuda and Art Thibert.

Bullets & Bracelets

Punisher / Wonder Woman: Many years before, Trevor Castle, a vigilante, formed an unlikely romance with rogue princess Diana of Themyscira. Their child has now been kidnapped by Thanoseid and the two reforge their relationship to save their child. It is written by John Ostrander and drawn by Gary Frank and Cam Smith.

Speed Demon

Flash / Ghost Rider: When Blaze Allen chants "Gone, gone, o'form of man..." he transforms into the leather-clad monster called Etrigan, the Speed Demon. Howard Mackie writes while Sal Larocca and Al Milgrom provide the art.

X-Patrol

Doom Patrol / X-Force: Six outsiders, Ferro-Man, Elasti-Girl, H.U.S.K, Niles Cable, Shatterstarfire and Beastling, unite to face the menace called Doctor Doomsday. Karl Kesel writes the story and the art is by Roger (**X-Men**) Cruz.

From DC

Doctor Strangefate

Dr Fate / Dr Strange: The Supreme Lord of Order will do anything to preserve this new fused reality — even if it means killing the man known as Access. Ron Marz is the writer and Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez and Kevin Nowlan provide the art.

Assassins

Elektra / Catwoman: Dare and Catsai must navigate the deathtraps of Arkham Tower to save the targeted mayor of New Gotham. An alternative look at two of the most popular anti-heroines by Dan Chichester and Scott McDaniel.

Legends of the Dark Claw

Wolverine / Batman: The story of the adamantium-clawed protector of Gotham City and his young sidekick, Jubilee, in their war against the feral and psychotic Hyena. The special is written by Larry Hama and features the art of Jim Balent and Ray McCarthy.

Amazon

Storm / Wonder Woman: Reared on the hidden island of Themyscira, the weather-wielding mutant Ororo Monroe battles the gods of legend she has been raised to worship. The script and art are by John Byrne, reunited with inker Terry Austin.

Super-Soldier

Captain America / Superman: Transformed by an infusion of alien DNA, Clark Kent became the greatest American hero of WWII. Now revived, he must battle The Green Skull and the hordes of Hydra. Mark Waid writes the one-shot, with art by Dave Gibbons.

JLX

X-Men / JLA: A band of outlaws, hated by the world they've sworn to protect and hounded by the avenging heroes of the Justice League America! Mark Waid and Gerard Jones writes, with art by Howard Porter and John Dell.

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IN BRIEF

Four dreamers

DEFCON 4 is a new four-issue series from Image Comics by Mat Broome and Jeff Marriote. Set in a futuristic Japan it is about four people who join forces after having identical dreams foretelling the end of the world. The first $2.50 issue ships in March.

Caliber's Jinx

ONE of Caliber Comics' highly acclaimed creators is releasing his first ongoing series for the groundbreaking independent company.

Jinx is written and drawn by Brian Michael Bendix, the creator of the **AKA Goldfish** one-shots and graphic novels also from Caliber.

The story focuses on Goldfish and his partner Columbia and their search for the one big score which will set them up for life, when along comes Jinx, a bounty hunter and bailbondswoman. Goldfish is immediately drawn to her and this sets up a series of adventures which creator Bendis describes as a sort of *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly* meets *Annie Hall*.

The first issue ships in March and retails for $2.95.

Walter's back!

WALTER: Campaign of Terror is a **Mask** spin-off series by Dark Horse Comics' regulars John Arcudi, Doug Mahnke and Keith Williams.

The Mask's mountainous arch-enemy has finally been brought in by the cops and is given his day in court. Tying in with the original two **The Mask** mini-series the first $2.50 issue ships in March.

Exit Dan Jurgens

DAN Jurgens has announced his decision to quit the new Spider-Man title, **The Sensational Spider-Man**, despite favourable sales reaction to his first two issues.

"**Sensational Spider-Man** #6 is my last issue. I regret that I can't stay longer because I have a reasonably good track record of staying with projects but this is one of those situations that just wasn't working out."

Ironically, Jurgens' editor Bob Budiansky was a victim of the recent Marvel editorial purge and indications are that Jurgens may return to the comic.

Marvel's unfinished business with Image duo

MARVEL Comics Group has announced the much-anticipated reunion between the renowned comic-book creators Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld, who left the company in 1992 to establish Image Comics.

Stan Lee, chairman of Marvel Comics, revealed that the publisher had signed 12-month personal contracts with Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld to reshape a group of core, classic Marvel characters — Captain America, The Avengers, Fantastic Four and Iron Man.

Dubbed "unfinished business", by Marvel Comics Group president Jerry Calabrese, the deal also reunites Lee and Liefeld with their former editor at Marvel, Bob Harras — who is now editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics.

Working on a monthly basis, Lee and Liefeld will begin redirecting the titles in mid-1996. They will continue at the same time to run their own studios independently from any projects with Marvel.

"We're matching some of the best talent in the industry with some of the best characters in the industry to change the status quo and create the stuff of legends!" enthused Stan Lee.

"The goal is to move away from conventional concepts and create more fun, more excitement and more heat in the industry, to re-energise comic-book retailers and fans everywhere," he added.

Bob Harras explained, "Jim and Rob will have total creative control over every aspect of the four books and everybody who works on the books, with Jim in charge of **Fantastic Four** and **Iron Man** and Rob in charge of **Captain America** and **The Avengers**.

"Jim and Rob will personally pencil at least the first six issues of one of the two titles that they control, with Jim doing **Fantastic Four** and Rob **Captain America**.

"The books will continue to be Comic Code Authority-approved for general audiences," Harras said.

"Current storylines featuring these characters will lead directly into Lee and Liefeld's plans, and will be integrated into a big event this summer."

"It's all part of Marvel's plans for '96, so that going into '97, Marvel Universe and Marvel Comics will look a lot different than today. We'll make more announcements in the coming months."

In 1992, after working on the two best selling comic-books ever (Lee on the 8 million **X-Men** 1 and Liefeld on the 5 million **X-Force** 1), the two creators made headlines when they left Marvel to set up Image Comics along with five other freelance creators working for the publisher — Marc Silvestri, Todd McFarlane, Whilce Portacio, Erik Larsen and Jim Valentino.

Image has since become the third largest comic-book company in the US, with Lee's Wildstorm imprint creating popular titles for Image such as **WildC.A.T.s**, **WetWorks** and **Gen-13**.

Liefeld's Extreme Studios imprint also did well for the new publisher, creating the equally popular **Youngblood** series.

"This is a dream come true for Jim and me," said Liefeld. "Captain America is Marvel's oldest currently published character, and **The Fantastic Four** is the book that started the Marvel Revolution in the early 1960s.

"Jim and I grew up on them. To be able to take creative control of these and their related books is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity."

"This is a radical departure from the way Marvel has been doing business with creators," said Jim Lee. "The company has given us unparalleled latitude with these characters.

"And the challenge of updating the classic Lee/Kirby legends was one we couldn't pass up."

Liefeld: "Let's put this industry back together"

In a prepared statement that appears to be a move to counter criticism over his failure to produce material, Rob Liefeld revealed that he has committed himself to producing ten to 12 issues' worth of illustrated work in 1996.

He encouraged his peers to do the same in a press release issued shortly after the announcement of the "unfinished business" deal.

"For the past year the comics industry has asked itself why it has fallen on troubled times, time and again. I can't help but feel that one of the answers for our dilemma is that when the top talents in any industry stop producing work, that industry is bound to suffer for it.

"If Cruise, Stallone, Carrey and Schwarzenegger all stopped making films, Hollywood would feel a significant loss.

"In essence that's what has happened in the comics industry. The top talents have stopped or slowed down their output and, speaking as a fan myself, we have all suffered for it. I know that I was more satisfied as a fan, and that the industry itself was much healthier when regular work was being produced by names such as Todd McFarlane, Jim Lee, Joe Quesada, Arthur Adams, Mike Mignola, Frank Miller and Dale Keown — to name but a few.

"Not only have we stopped producing regular work, but we have set a poor example for the generations of artists and creators following us. As artists, the only way we will continue to improve and impress is by doing regular work.

"We have let our industry down by not producing the amount of work that retailers and fans had come to expect of us. When that amount of work returns, I predict we will have a healthier industry.

"1995 was a tough year on the industry and we all felt the effects of what seemed to be a terribly turbulent year. The shakedown left several comic companies, distributors and retailers severely damaged or destroyed. It's time to start the work of putting this industry back together again. I can't think of a better way to begin this task than to have the most talented creators returning to their boards, full time, and producing the volumes of work that made this industry the powerhouse it once was.

"I personally and publicly commit to producing 10 to 12 full issues worth of illustrated work in 1996. This will begin with the ***Extreme Destroyer Prologue*** *in late January and continue throughout the year with special projects until the summer and fall, when the relaunch of Marvel's* ***Captain America*** *and the* ***Avengers*** *begins.*

"I'm ecstatic about '96 and have been planning during most of the past year for all the exciting projects we have at Extreme.

"I encourage my friends and peers, writers and artists everywhere, to pick up this gauntlet I have presented and begin the work of healing our industry by providing it with the best stories and art."

Barb Wire Movie adaptation from Dark Horse

DARK Horse Comics' "bad girl" Barb Wire will follow in the footsteps of The Mask and become the focus of a major new feature film, featuring *Baywatch* star Pamela Anderson in the lead role.

Dark Horse, who have already had success with adapting *The Mask: The Movie* back into its original comics format, intend to release two 48-page adaptations to coincide with the debut of the film.

Dark Horse is releasing a $3.95 full-colour version as well as a $3.50 magazine sized black and white edition for the newsstands.

The US entertainment industry has been quick to give coverage to the latest project. "The *Barb Wire* movie has been getting attention for months now," commented the comics' editor Randy Stradley. Not surprisingly both comic book versions will feature photo covers of the film's star.

"With a star as photogenic as Pamela [Anderson] on the covers, these comics ought to attract their own share of attention as well."

Barb Wire tells the story of Barb Kopetski, a part-time bartender and manhunter, who is trying to stay alive in the tough town of Steel Harbor during the second American Civil War of 2017.

Both the **Barb Wire Special** and the **Barb Wire Magazine Special** are written by Sara (**Catwoman**) Byam and are illustrated by Gordon (**Star Trek**) Purcell. The magazine edition will carry a full-colour poster of Anderson in her Barb Wire costume. Both titles will ship on March 27.

Dark Horse is also releasing a special one-shot called **Bettie Page Comics** by Dave Stevens and a number of "good girl" artists. The release coincides with a special TV documentary on the cult '50s model in April.

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Ennis in the DC Universe

HITMAN is a new DC Universe title by senior Vertigo writer Garth Ennis and artist John McCrea.

Hitman follows the strange adventures of Tommy Monaghan, a hard-hitting hired assassin whose speciality is killing his fellow metahumans.

In the first story arc, Hitman, working under contract, breaks into Arkham Asylum to kill the Joker — attracting the attention of Gotham's protector, Batman.

But Hitman also comes under the scrutiny of creatures known as the Arkannone, two bullet-ridden demons who want Monaghan to become their mortal agent.

Hitman also stars in the lead feature of **The Batman Chronicles** 4, a tie-in to the *Contagion* story in the other Batman books and also written and drawn by Ennis and McCrea. The first issue of **Hitman** retails for $2.25 and ships on February 20.

Marvel repackages TV comics

IN A bid to attract new readers, Marvel Comics is relaunching two of its animated TV tie-in comics in its successful 99c format.

The Adventures of the X-Men, based on the immensely successful networked TV cartoon series, is by **X-Men Adventures'** regular team of Ralph Macchio and Ben Herrera. The first issue, shipping in April, features the animated X-Men team with X-Factor in a confrontation with the old savage Hulk.

Adventures of Spider-Man, by Nel Yomtov and Alex Saviuk, is also a new name for an old product. Originally entitled **Spider-Man Adventures**, the new series sees Spidey battling the Punisher. Future issues feature Doctor Octopus, The Lizard, Hammerhead and Carnage (for kids). The first issue ships in April 1996.

Image follows suit

Adopting a method traditionally used in Britain for rebinds, in which several back issues are stitched together to make a bumper comic (such as the **Mad Super Specials**), Image Comics is to repackage many of its original launch titles with new covers and inserted pages — and all for 99 cents.

The first rebind comics at the new price include **Cyberforce** and **The Dragon**, a repackaging of **The Savage Dragon** mini-series.

Marvel Comics consolidates company with major cutbacks

Marvel Entertainment Group has announced it has taken certain actions to restructure its publishing and trading card businesses in an attempt to improve profitability of those operations.

In a press release, William C. Bevins, CEO of Marvel, stated, "We have set a course designed to promptly strengthen the profitability of both businesses and to position them for strong future growth."

The company announced it is eliminating unprofitable and marginally profitable titles in its publishing division, thereby creating a strong line-up comprising Marvel's most profitable titles. The company also stated that its comic books will focus more on stories and less on physical product features and enhancements in order to bring back old readers and attract new readers.

The return of Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld, to reshape four core titles, was cited as an example of Marvel's commitment to strengthening editorial product content.

Marvel also stated that an exciting new mass market comic product will be introduced in early 1996.

Operations will also be streamlined through the introduction of new technology and consolidation of facilities. Combined with the reduction in titles, these measures will significantly reduce editorial, production, distribution and administrative overhead expense.

The focus on editorial content rather than enhanced covers and expensive papers will bring significant reductions in manufacturing costs. These cost savings will so improve direct profit margins to enable the publishing unit to realise a profit in 1996.

Trading card operational overheads are being reduced through the consolidation of production facilities at Fleer plants and the reduction of sales and distribution overheads.

Mr. Bevins finished by saying, "We continue to be very optimistic about the long-term prospects for Marvel as a diversified youth entertainment company based on key intellectual properties. Our franchise in comics and cards continues to be very strong with Marvel Comics dominating the top 100 list and Fleer/SkyBox holding key licenses with all the major [US] sports leagues and entertainment properties.

"We anticipate that 1996 cost savings generated by the restructuring plan will significantly improve profitability for these businesses in 1996 and beyond.

"We are very excited about the future growth of Marvel in the emerging electronic publishing area. As an example, we will soon be announcing a major on-line license which was concluded in the fourth quarter of 1995. We also expect our first Marvel Mania restaurant to open in 1996.

"When combined with anticipated strong performance from Marvel's other businesses, we look forward to a success in 1996 consistent with our pre-1995 performance."

Marvel's restructuring of its publishing and trading-card operations resulted in 275 lay-offs, a fourth-quarter pretax charge of $25 million and an overall loss.

The company said the fourth-quarter charge will bring its total special charges for the year to $65 million. Full-year net income before extraordinary items should be about 5 cents a share. For the fourth quarter ended December 31, 1994, Marvel reported net income of $14.5 million, or 14 cents a share, on revenues of $163.9 million. For the year ended December 31, 1994, the company earned $62 million, or 60 cents a share, on revenues of $515 million.

The restructuring activities are expected to result in future period savings of about $16 million annually.

The company said it expects savings generated by the restructuring plan will "significantly improve profitability" for the affected businesses in 1996 and beyond.

The following people no longer work in Marvel editorial: Bob Budiansky (Spider-Man family group editor), Joey Cavalieri (2099 group editor), Chris Cooper (**Punisher** editor), Eric Fein, Mike Lackey, Mary McFerrin (all from the Spider-family), Marc McLaurin and Carl Potts (Marvel Alterniverse editors) and Marvel Heroes editor Nel Yomtov.

Acclaim continues to diversify

ACCLAIM Comics continues its swing away from superhero titles and into a more diverse field.

Valiant Comics editor-in-chief Bob Layton teams with veterans Don Perlin and Gonzalo Mayo for a four-part series featuring Ript and Claude, two wise-cracking survivalist dinosaurs in a dying world. The series is suggested for mature readers and the first $2.95 issue ships in March.

Killer Instinct by Doug Moench and Paul Gulacy is also a new diverse series from Acclaim. The story set in a future devastated by a civil war started by computer-conglomerate Ultratech many years before and a plot to uncover the company's evil world domination plans. The first $2.50 issue ships at the end of March.

Nicieza relaxes with 22 Brides

WITH the current trend for "Hot Babes" still keeping many retailers afloat, Event Comics is launching a new title which promises to be a little different from the average "warrior woman" title.

The comic **22 Brides: Married to the Mob**, doesn't feature only one lethal lady, but — as the title suggests — 22 of them. Originally introduced in Joe Quesada's **Ash** 3, the 22 brides consist of budding musician sisters Carrie and Libby and a loose-knit group of women who are undistressed to find themselves in a mob war.

The series is written by Fabian Nicieza, who admits that the series is proving to be a great change from his days writing **The X-Men**.

"The **22 Brides** series is nothing more, nothing less than a hell bent, balls out, break the speed limit and the cops be damned, roller coaster ride through underworld sleaze, sex, drugs, mosh pits, cold metal guns, red-painted fingernails, classics quoting hitmen, grinding guitars, Billy Barty-esque mob bosses and a bunch of fun-loving, blood-spitting ladies who want nothing more than the chance to be a typical, dysfunctional, Glock-toting American family! You can tell I'm having *fun* with this."

Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti — the Event mainstays — are co-plotters for the series, but the art is being produced by a newcomer to comics, Scott Lee.

Nicieza is particularly happy to be working with Lee, someone he has had an interest in for some time. "One of my own personal discoveries (although I never saw his artwork until Joe and Jimmy showed it to me), Scott draws in what I would call an early John Byrne/Alan Davis style. Clean lines and real smooth storytelling (that means you can follow what's going on from panel to panel — remember panel-to-panel storytelling? Before 1989, it used to be the foundation of comics).

"He's a nice kid, too," continued Nicieza, "makes a jaded, cynical old fart like me question all of my previous expectations about where our industry is headed! I mean, a new young talent who draws realistically, tells the story, hands his work in on schedule and is also polite and level-headed!"

Nicieza, who seems to be lined up for more work for Event Comics, concluded, "All this and the storyline ties in to the characters and subplots running through the main **Ash** title — so all **Ash** readers can begin to see the Event Universe as it is carefully developed along!"

The first issue of **22 Brides** is scheduled to ship at the end of March, and will retail for $2.95. Retailers note: For every 50 copies of the title ordered they will receive a free **22 Brides** Connoisseur's Kit, with a limited *Shotgun Wedding* lithograph by Joe Quesada.

Maximum Moore's Warchild

WARCHILD, the character who helped Rob Liefeld launch his own comics imprint, Maximum Press, is returning in a new series.

Warchild will be written by Alan Moore and will feature Rob Liefeld art for at least the first two issues. The ongoing series begins shipping in March, and the first bi-monthly issue is cover-priced $2.50.

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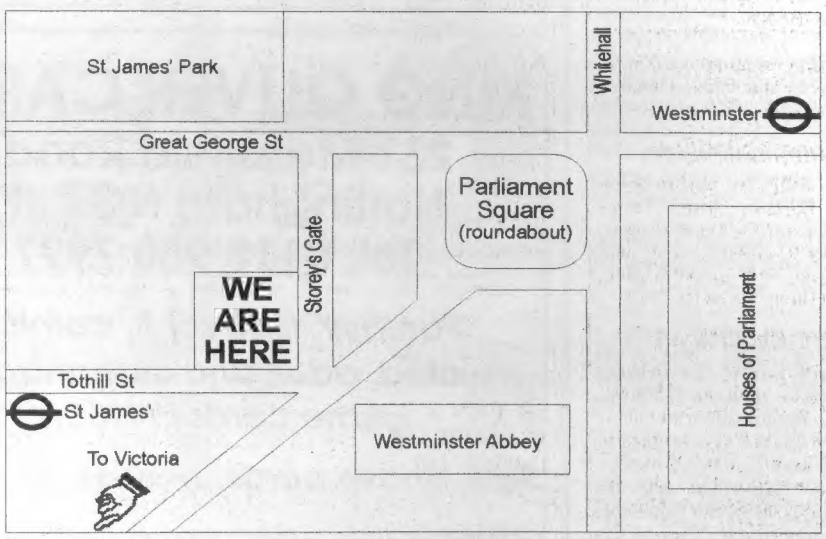

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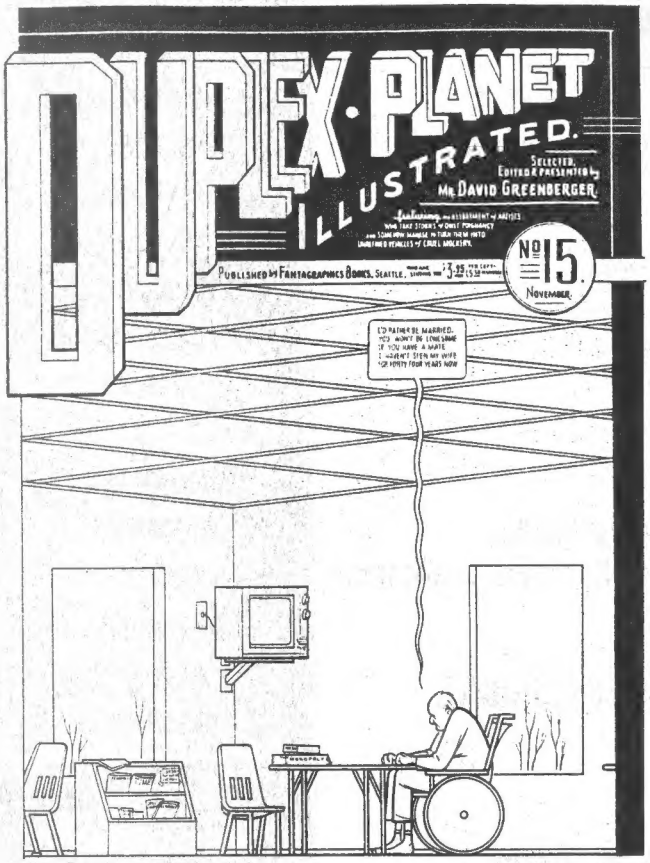

*Above: Chris Ware's cover illustration for Fantagraphics' **Duplex Planet Illustrated**. Issue 15 is a double-sized special retailing for $3.95. This is the final issue of David Greenberger's semi-autobiographical account of working at the Duplex nursing home in Boston, Massachusetts. **Duplex Planet Illustrated** started as a magazine of conversations with elderly residents, revealing their wit, philosophies and a stream of profound observations. It eventually became an anthology comic dealing with old age.*

IN BRIEF

Brand new Phoenix

DESPITE some uncertainty as to when Malibu's Ultraverse will cease operations, the company has announced a new title spun off from the **Phoenix Resurrection** series.

Foxfire (not to be confused with **The Punisher** character) is by Ian Edgington and Kevin West.

The series opens with the adventures of the girl linked with the Phoenix force and the first issue retails at the Ultraverse's new $1.50 price.

Alien Justice

NEIL Gaiman's Wheel of Worlds will be published in March by Big Entertainment (nee Tekno Comix).

Based on Neil Gaiman's Lady Justice character, the first issue of **Wheel of Worlds** sees the spirit transposed to outer space — and into the bodies of three women from different realities.

The 48-page comic retails for $3.25 and is written by Bruce Jones, art by Jose Delbo and Terry Beatty.

Elfquest blunder

DESPITE reports to the contrary, **Elfquest** is alive and well. Wendy Pini is returning to WaRP Graphics projects after concluding some current storylines and series.

WaRP has a number of new projects scheduled for 1996 and with the *Elfquest* animated film in production, details of the company's plans are expected in April.

Topps collection

JAMES BOND: Goldeneye Special Edition from Topps Comics is written by Don McGregor, with art by Claude St Aubin and Rick Magyar. This special edition collects all three comics for $5.95.

More exclusives

BILL Tucci's Crusade Entertainment and Joe Michael Linsner's Sirius Entertainment have signed exclusivity agreements with Diamond Distributors. Crusade's contract has already begun and Sirius's starts in March.

Copperfield's Kirby

JACK Kirby is featured in a new anthology from HarperCollins entitled **David Copperfield's Tales of the Impossible**. Kirby was writing a novel before his death, and an extract has been edited to be included in **Tales of the Impossible** as a short story.

Diamond cutbacks

DIAMOND Comics Distributors is consolidating its operation in accordance with projected future market needs. This has resulted in the closure of 15 US warehouses and the loss of 180 staff and leaves the company with eight US regional centres plus its UK base.

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COVER GALLERY

Amalgam-ation heroes

SOME of the top names in the comics industry have been lined up for the Amalgam Comics merger between DC and Marvel.

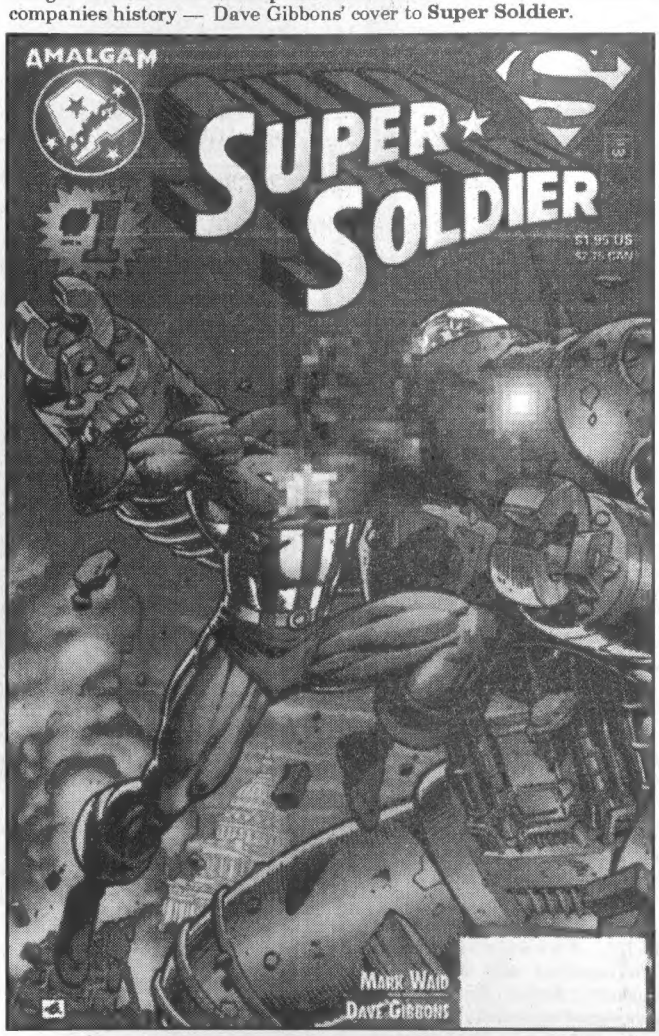
Mark Waid, Karl Kesel, John Byrne, John Ostrander and Gerard Jones are among the writers on the 12 $1.95 one-shot titles, and the co-editors of the project, Mike Carlin (DC) and Mark Gruenwald (Marvel) have lined up many fan-favourites to provide the artwork.

Clockwise from the right: Cary Nord's **Bruce Wayne: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.**; Salvador Larocca's **Speed Demon**; Gary Frank and Cam Smith's **Bullets & Bracelets**; John Byrne and Terry Austin's **Amazon**; Howard Porter's **JLX**; Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez and Kevin Nowlan's **Doctor Strangefate**; Scott McDaniel's **Assassins**; Mike Wieringo presents **Spider-Boy**; Roger Cruz's **X-Patrol**; and Image duo Jeff Matsuda and Art Thibert's **Magneto & The Magnetic Men**. Below is the merger of two of the most prominent characters from either comics companies history — Dave Gibbons' cover to **Super Soldier**.

Magneto (Marvel)

X-Patrol (Marvel)

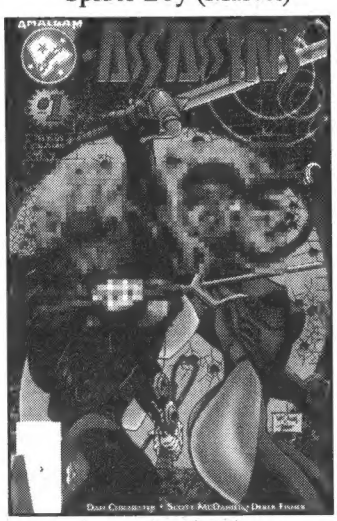
Spider-Boy (Marvel)



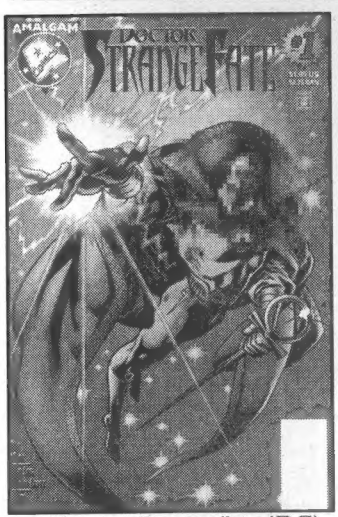
Bruce Wayne Agent of SHIELD

Speed Demon (Marvel)

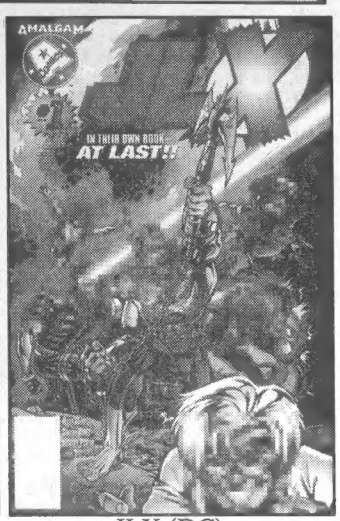
Bullets & Bracelets (Marvel)



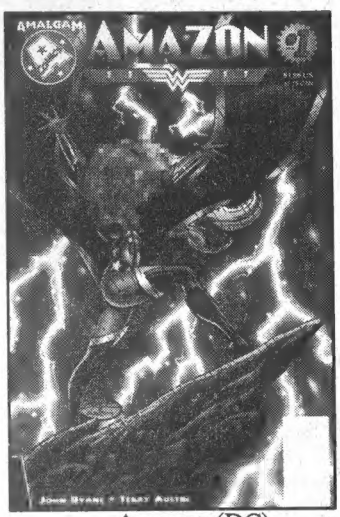
Assassins (DC)



Doctor Strangefate (DC)



JLX (DC)



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MAJOR DIGRESSIONS

The fall of the Marvel empire?

Peter David, writer of comics, paperbacks, film scripts and stuff, contributes a weekly column, "But I Digress" to US trade paper ***The Comic Buyer's Guide.*** *In addition to appearing monthly in* ***Comics International,*** *his scripting includes such comics as* ***Aquaman*** *for DC,* ***Soulsearchers & Co*** *for Claypool and* ***Incredible Hulk*** *for Marvel.*

THE PHONE has been ringing off the hook at Chez David, and many of the calls are from folks who seem to be aggrandizing my "importance" in the grand comic book scheme of things beyond anything that I could imagine. (And in the words of Han Solo, I can imagine quite a lot.)

As of this writing, the rumour mill and various computer boards are afire with word of the Rob Liefeld-Jim Lee-Marvel dance. The intrepid Myra (who continues to give me grief over the "We're separated" comment from the other issue: Honey, it was a joke, and it wasn't even *my* joke; it was Richard Pini's! I'm *sorry*, OK?) has fielded a variety of phone calls that fall into two categories:

People calling to report the latest rumour.

People calling to ask what the latest rumour is.

The tendency is for people to speak in sweeping generalizations and say that Marvel is working out a deal with Image. But that is not the case, because Image is — ultimately — six guys. And the other four (except in one or two fleeting rumours which seem extremely unreliable) simply don't factor into the doings.

Here is the buzz that is all over the place — and I should note that I'm in gossip-columnist mode here rather than reporter mode, which is why I haven't called various folks at comics companies and tried to finesse info out of them. (OK, actually, I have, but either they've been close-mouthed or said that they're "confirmed rumours." I can't confirm that they are true; I can only confirm that they are *rumours.*

Rumour #1: Marvel will hire Wildstorm and Extreme Studios to take over several titles.

Rumour #2: Marvel will licence Wildstorm and Extreme Studios to take over several titles.

Rumour #3: Marvel will hire Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld to take over several titles.

Some people will see no difference between #1 and #3, but there is a *big* difference. If the material is a product of Wildstorm and Extreme Studios, it's as if Marvel has suddenly become a shared imprint. It elevates those studios to co-producer status with Marvel.

But if it is just Rob and Jim (and the editorial facilities at their disposal), then, basically, the material is work-for-hire. They'd just be signing on as glorified Marvel employees.

This would be an interesting situation and one that all sides could claim victory in. Rob and Jim would essentially be given free reign over key characters in the Marvel Universe. And Marvel executives could jump up and down and claim that they've won because they've got Rob Liefeld and Jim Lee back working for Marvel.

But would both sides really be winners?

Let's come back to that.

Instead, let's discuss the characters being bandied about.

The same titles keep being mentioned over and over again. They are: **Captain America**, **The Avengers**, **Fantastic Four**, **Iron Man**, **Thor**, and...

You've guessed it. **The Incredible Hulk**.

It is, of course, the inclusion of **Hulk** that has some people speculating beyond anything that the "speculators' market" could have dreamt up. Because I was astounded to learn from Myra that some callers were of the following opinion: that the entire thing was being developed, engineered, and pursued by the Image creators purely so that they could take **Incredible Hulk** away from me.

Good God.

Even I, egomaniac that I am, don't have the gall to think that anyone would go to all that trouble and effort just to get me fired off a comic book. In fact, considering the grief my long-suffering editors have been getting as I get bogged down in *Space Cases* deadlines, it's a miracle I haven't gotten myself fired off anything all on my own.

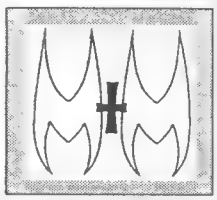
Not to mention that matters are perfectly cool between Rob and me, and I've never had *any* dispute with Jim Lee.

As to exactly how this business is being approached, again, a couple of rumours are flying from a variety of sources.

The first is that they would take over all six titles, essentially acting as freelance editors-overseers and taking a John Byrne **Man of Steel** route in recreating the characters from the ground up.

The second is that they would take over all the titles (with the same **Man of Steel** editorial slant) except **Thor** and **Hulk** but that those latter two titles would cease to exist. Instead, Thor and Hulk would be relegated to the status of supporting characters in the other comics.

This, of course, would be a fine how-do-you-do. Fans of **Incredible Hulk** would get to see it tossed on the scrap heap, the title cancelled, and — from a personal point of view



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— nearly a decade's worth of stories rendered moot, as the character is handed over to others, to do with as they will.

Then again, since Marvel itself rendered all my Spider-Man stories moot last year with the clone imbroglio, there's a certain consistency to it all. Besides, why should I deserve any different treatment than Chris Claremont or Julie Schwartz?

And, of course, there will be the hardcore Image fans, rubbing their hands and gleefully shouting, "Payback! Payback!" Which makes perfect sense. Write a few columns criticising a comic book line, pummel a guy in a debate: Naturally that's sufficient offence to warrant losing a job.

It's all nonsense. The main reason I've stayed on **Hulk** for as long as I have is that Bobbie Chase has stayed with it, as well. Indeed, there were times when pressure was put on her to give the title to someone else, but she refused to let it stray from her hands. And, if it had gone to another editor with whom I felt I couldn't work, that would have been the end of my tenure on the title.

For that matter, it might very well have not been up to me. There's countless instances of a comic book switching editorial hands, and the first thing an editor does is fire the existing creative team and bring in someone else. So, if this deal *does* go through, it's no different than if the title had gone to another editor. A transition would be made, and the fans would have to live with it.

The fans —

How will they react, I wonder?

That's the really tough question. And as with all really tough questions, there's no easy answer.

Well, actually there is, if you're thinking from the point of view of Marvel's money men. Because when they're thinking of fan reaction, what they're really pondering (much like Pinky in *Pinky and the Brain*) is: Will the sales go up?

And there's an easy answer to that: Yes, they will. There's no doubt in my mind. The curiosity factor alone will send sales through the roof. And to the Marvel bean counters, who wouldn't know a story arc from Noah's ark (who think that Ditko is a company run by a guy named Dit and that Kirby is a little guy from a video game and Lee — wait Lee's the guy who's taking over some of the comics, right?), to these individuals, that's all that is important.

I noted earlier that, if this is a work-for-hire situation, Liefeld and Lee on one hand and Marvel on the other can each claim they have the better end of the deal.

Who truly does?

Again, that's obvious. (You know. maybe these questions weren't as hard as I thought.)

Liefeld and Lee may have detractors who dredge up the old charge of "selling out," if they return to the work-for-hire environment of Marvel. Except, clearly, neither of them run companies that actively practise it. And on the other hand, they can point out that they're returning to Marvel under terms that Marvel has never doled out to any freelancers (at least, not to any significant degree).

Essentially, they'd be freelance editors, running the show with titles that include Marvel's oldest currently published character (Captain America) and the comic book that started it all (**Fantastic Four**). And if they do have the latitude to reshape characters in their own way, from the ground up, then to all intents and purposes they're being given license to take a wrecking ball to the "House of Ideas" and erect a new structure called "Condo of Concepts."

That's a hell of a lot of crowing rights.

Turn it around and let's look at Marvel's angle on its own triumph by luring Rob, Jim and whoever else back into the fold.

Well, they'll make money.

And then, of course, they can boast about making money.

And — joy of joys — they'll make money.

What can they boast about *besides* making money.

They can boast that they have sent the following message to the marketplace:

We give up.

We do not trust our current line-up of editors to come up with new and exciting marketing ideas or publishing plans to turn around the sales.

We do not trust our current line-up of writers to produce stories of sufficient interest to draw enough readership to make the stockholders happy.

We do not trust our current line-up of artists to become hot enough to get readers fired up and excited.

In short, the slow erosion of Marvel's sales which we transformed into a full-fledged landslide upon taking over our own distribution and essentially destroying the direct market — a move which solidified marketplace opinion against Marvel, led to the splintering, exclusivity, the financial failure of retailers and distributors throughout the country, and an anti-Marvel sentiment unprecedented in the company's history — this landslide cannot be abated by the people we currently have producing comics for us.

So we have decided to give a public vote of no-confidence to these people and, instead, farm the comic books out to some other folks — folks who left because they felt we'd treated them shabbily — and now we're asking them to come back and save our butts.

Good job, Marvel. That's something you can really brag about.

But, hey, at least sales will go up.

And, ultimately, that's all that's important.

© Peter David, 1995

*(Since Peter David's writing of this column, it has been confirmed that Lee & Liefeld will produce — as work-for-hire — Marvel's **Avengers, Captain America, Iron Man** and **Fantastic Four**.*

*While **Thor** is finishing, Peter David's **The Incredible Hulk** title is no longer on the cancellation list.*

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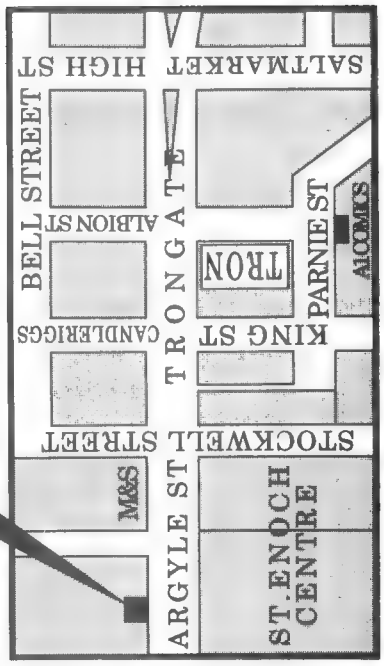

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Frank Miller and Bryan Talbot are two award winning creators with new graphic novels out from Titan Books.

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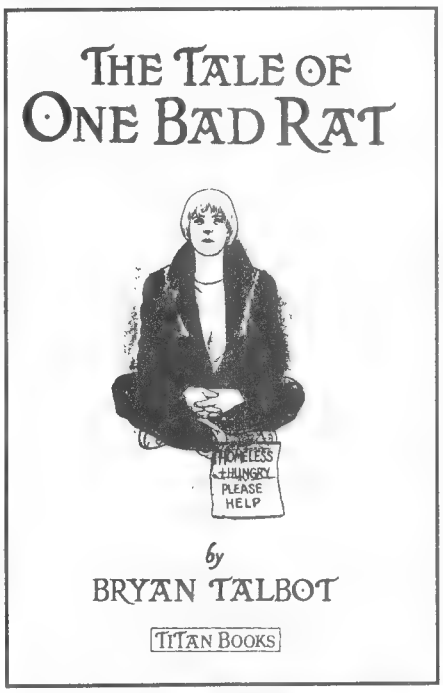
Both creators have won enormous critical acclaim as well as winning many awards in 1995 for these titles...



Bryan Talbot's **The Tale of One Bad Rat** is the Eisner Award winning graphic novel about a homeless young girl coping with the horrors of child abuse and homelessness and how she finally finds peace in Beatrix Potter's Cumbria and comes to terms with her past.
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a) Dan Dare
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What was the title of Bryan Talbot's futuristic, self-published hero?
a) Charlie Binnington
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Who co-created Martha Washington with Miller?
a) Stanley Gibbons
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143 ND £6.95
144,148,149 ..... £3.50
161 ..... £3.25
166 Paul Smith £4.50
168,169.172,174 Smth . £3.95
180 ..... £2.95
184 ..... £3.95
185-192 ..... £2.95
193,203 ..... £3.95
194-198 ..... £2.95
199 ..... £3.25
200 ..... £5.50
204,206-209 ..... £3.50
205 B.W.Smith £8.00
210,211 Mutant Mass .. £7.95
212,213 Mutant Mass . £15.00

UNCANNY X-MEN
214-220 ..... £2.95
221,222 ..... £7.50
223,224 ..... £2.95
226 ..... £3.95
227 ..... £3.50
228-232 ..... £2.50
233 ..... £2.95
234-237,239 ..... £2.50
240-243 Inferno £2.95
244 1st Jubilee £6.50
245 Rob Liefield £3.95
246,247,249,250 ..... £2.50
248 1st Jim Lee art £9.00
251,252 ..... £2.50
253 ..... £2.95
255 ..... £2.50
257 ..... £4.95
259 ..... £2.95
260,261,263-265 ..... £2.50
269 Lee £4.50
270 Lee £5.50
271,272 Lee £4.95
273,275 Lee £4.50
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311-315 ..... £1.25
316,317 Phalanx £2.50
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322 ..... £1.50
323,324,326-330 ..... £1.40
325 Giant Anniversary .. £2.95

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1A, 1B, 1C, 1D ea. .. £1.25
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30 Wedding £2.95
31,32 ..... £1.95
33-35 ..... £1.60
36,37 Phalanx £2.50

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38,39,42 Deluxe £1.50
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BATMAN/PREDATOR .. £4.50
BATMAN:YEAR ONE .. £6.95
BATMAN:YEAR TWO .. £6.95
SWORD OF AZRAEL TPB £5.99
KNIGHTFALL PART 1 .. £7.99
KNIGHTFALL PART 2 .. £7.99
BATMAN:KNIGHTSEND £9.99

BATMAN/JUDGE DREDD
(Prestige comic format)
1:Judgement Gotham .. £4.50
2:Vendetta on Gotham . £4.50
3:Ultimate Riddle £3.50

BIG BOOK OF..
(DC Paradox Press)
BIG BOOK OF DEATH . £8.95
BB URBAN LEGENDS . £8.95
BB OF WEIRDOS £8.95
BB OF CONSPIRACIES £8.95

INVISIBLES
1 ..... £3.95
2 ..... £2.95
3,4 ..... £1.95
5-8 ..... £1.50
9-17 ..... £1.75

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1 ..... £19.00
2-31 most in stock ..... please phone
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46 scarce £2.95
47-49 ..... £1.50
50 GS £2.00
51-56 ..... £1.50
57-68 ..... £1.40
69-72 ..... £1.75
SANDMAN MIDNIGHT THEATRE £4.75

SANDMAN TRADE P/B'S
Brief Lives £12.50
The Dolls House £9.99
Preludes & Nocturnes . £10.50
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Seasons Of Mist £9.99
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CHURCH/STATE 2 ... £18.95
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WOMEN £11.95
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8,10-16,20 ..... £2.95
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29-35 ..... £1.95
36-40 ..... £1.60

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ORDERING INSTRUCTIONS

Minimum order is £5 plus postage. Postage (inland UK) is £3 per order (Eire,CI,Overseas - enquire). Postal insurance add 75p. Payment by cheque or postal order payable to **Mega-City**. Visa or Mastercard accepted (quote full number, expiry date and cardholders name - order must be signed by cardholder). Please state alternative choices if acceptable. Please allow up to 28 days for delivery (average delivery time 7 days or less). For complete 32 page catalogue, send first class stamp or see CI no.61 (catalogue enclosed free with order). This list expires February 28th 1996.
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SHOP VACANCY

Mega-City has a full time vacancy for a bright, intelligent person, aged 24+.

Position includes all aspects of shop work, but will focus on the running of the shop's prestigious Standing Order service. Previous sales and/or mail-order experience, along with a reasonable knowledge of the current comics scene, would be an asset. Full training in the use of in house computer software given.

An excellent opportunity to take on a responsible role, in London's leading comic shop. Starting salary circa 9 - 10k, dependant on experience. Full salary review after 3 months.

Hand written letter of application, along with typewritten CV should be sent **for the attention of the Manager**, at the address above.

Cartoon Hits: ICA's first comic

THE Institute of Contemporary Arts launches its very first comic, **Cartoon Hits**, on February 7.

Designed by artists Simon Grennan and Christopher Sperandio, the comic is an interactive cartoon adventure and features the stories of another thirteen ICA members.

In a unique project, the ICA invited its members to submit real life anecdotes to be turned into computer-generated comics stories. These autobiographical tales tell stories as diverse as hallucinogenic pigeon-contaminated water to the first fumbling kiss with the Avon lady's daughter.

Grennan and Sperandio work from studios in Manhattan and Manchester and communicate via, what they call, a virtual studio linked by technology. This is the duo's second comic work, their first being a collection of American prisoners' stories, which was published last year.

For **Cartoon Hits**, the artists invited the ICA members not only to provide stories, but also pose for photographs that formed the basis for the computer generated cels and eventually the contributors were the stars of their own stories.

Grennan and Sperandio will be joined by Neil Gaiman on February 7, for the launch reception and a discussion on the comic in an ICA presentation called *International Art Thieves*.

The talk starts at 7.30pm and costs £5.50 (members £4.50) and will be held at the ICA's headquarters in The Mall, London SW1. For further information and availability of tickets call the box office on 0171 930 3647.

Fleetway changes

FLEETWAY has announced a number of changes to its comics line and in its editorial staff.

Best of 2000AD Monthly, recently renamed **Classic 2000AD**, is now bi-monthly and its price is increased to £2.00. **Lawman of the Future** increases in price with issue 14, to £1.10. January's **Megazine** is the first monthly issue, the price is increased to £2.00, but will now feature two Dredd tales and longer supporting stories.

Following a restructuring by new managing director, Frank Knau, there has been some editorial movement at Fleetway. This includes David Bishop becoming the new editor of **2000AD**; John Tomlinson now edits on **Megazine** and **Lawman of the Future**.

Both editors, and **2000AD** designer Steve Cook, will continue to report to Steve MacManus, who remains group managing editor.

IN BRIEF

Crowed out!

CROW Comics, after an attempt to revitalise the UK independent market, has decided to cancel its ambitious **Force 10** series, due to a fall in sales.

Jan Morris said that although it was a tough decision, they will fulfil subscribers and readers commitment with a graphic novel, due later this year. Crow Comics will be at UKCAC in March and will answer any questions or problems in the small press arena.

Totally underground

PROVING that underground comix are not solely produced by the likes of Gilbert Shelton, Richard Corben and the UK's Knockabout Comics, Glasgow based Curt Sibling is the brain behind **Total Fear** — a hybrid of **The Furry Freak Brothers** and **Viz**. The anthology, which is up to issue three, features strips such as *Bad Karma*, *The Doors* (which is about the drug taking experiences of the '60s rock band) and *Those Manson Kids*.

Total Fear is available for 50p, plus 25p postage from 78 Overtoun Road, Clydebank, Dumbarton.

Nationwide Rat

DESPITE having been on sale in comic shops for the last two months, Bryan Talbot's **The Tale of One Bad Rat** is getting nationwide distribution in high street bookstores.

To coincide with this there is an exhibition of artwork from the series at The National Museum of Cartoon Art. Talbot, who has just returned from a two week Bad Rat tour, said, "**Bad Rat** is being read by many people who never read comics. I've lost count of the number of people who've shown [it] to their wives, uncles, mothers, workmates — it's very accessible."

The book is already being used in some American Child Abuse centres to help people talk about their own experiences. The book is also being published in Italy by Phoenix Press in association with Telefono Azzuro.

"I never set out to write a "worthy" comic. I just wanted to write a cracking good read." Talbot concluded.

New card holder

JUSTIN Ebbs, the pioneer of comics peripherals in the Eighties, is now introducing a new range of semi-rigid single trading card holders, in attempt to aid trading card collectors', as he did comics fans.

"This is an item I've been wanting to stock for some time, it is an excellent compliment to the nine and six pocket pages, especially for chase cards." said Justin Ebbs.

ADMISSION FREE

CARD MART

1996

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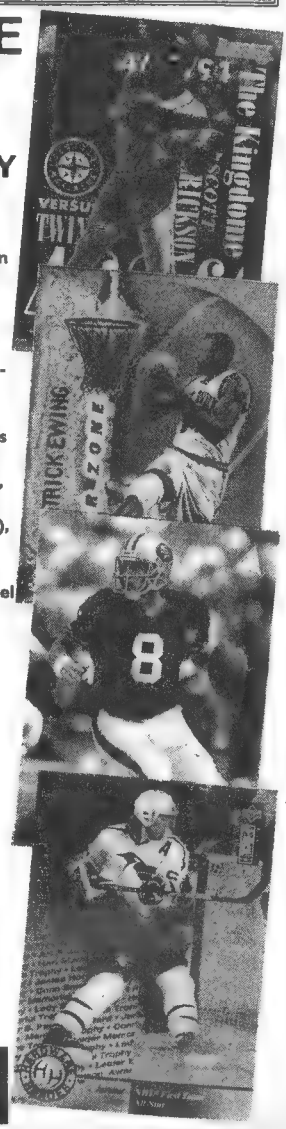
For boxes, sets, singles or insert cards, CARD MART is the place for American sports and non-sports trading cards.
Refreshments are available throughout the day from the refreshment area located in the dealers room.
Future CARD MART dates: 28th JANUARY (cc), 25th FEBRUARY (cc), 31st MARCH (rnh), 28th APRIL (cc), 26th MAY(cc), 30th JUNE (rnh), 4th AUGUST (cc), 15th SEPTEMBER (cc), 20th OCTOBER (rnh), 1st DECEMBER (cc).
cc = Camden Centre, rnh = Royal National Hotel

For information on table availability contact:
Rob on 0181 870 3776.

How to get there:
Bus: 10, 17, 30, 45, 46, 63, 73, 91, 214, 259 or 359 to Kings Cross or Camden Town Hall.
Underground: Circle, Metropolitan, Northern, Piccadilly or Victoria Line to Kings Cross.

NEXT CARD MART: JANUARY 28TH



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UK top selling comics chart hindered by publishers

VIZ's sales remained at the top spot among UK comic titles for the second year. Marvel UK's **Doctor Who** makes it into the top nine, despite having lost sales of nearly 2,000 per month. *Report by Simon Rogers*

Its position is helped of course, by the fact that the **Beano, Dandy** and **Bunty** (published by DC Thomson and all going up in sales, last year) have ceased to release certified figures. Like Fleetway, Manga and the majority of Redan and Marvel UK, those titles remain in exile because they are uncertified. Whether this reflects a depressed market is known only to the publishers' accountants.

Some newspaper and magazine publishers have stopped declaring ABC's because it allowed competitors to chart declines in sales and lure away advertisers. In the top nine, Marvel has gained the upper hand over Redan when it comes to **Thomas the Tank Engine**, but both seem popular.

The other prime example of multiple licensing, **Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers** is hidden in the uncertified group.

The BBC remains the dominant comics publisher although its priorities, and possibly the position of other companies, are reflected in its casual dismissal of any competitors other than Redan. They haven't managed to avoid recession entirely, however. Their **Look-In** style **Fast Forward**, which held fourth place in the last top ten, has been cancelled.

After **Fast Forward's** initial success in 1989, editor Nicky Smith moved up to take control of the BBC's group of teenage titles. She has repeated that success elsewhere, but rather with youth magazines.

(Previous year's placings in brackets, circulation figures are followed by change +/- against the previous period.)
All figures courtesy of the Audit Bureau of Circulation.

1	(1)	**Viz**	(John Brown)
		527,030 (-44,265) [ABC Jan-Jun 95]	
2	(3)	**BBC Toybox**	(BBC)
		110,128 (+8,165) [ABC Jan-Jun 95]	
3	(5)	**Fun to Learn with Rosie & Jim**	(Redan)
		68,478 (+2,770) [ABC Jan-Jun 95]	
4	(9)	**Thomas the Tank Engine & Friends**	(Marvel)
		48,999 (+3,168) [ABC Jan-Jun 95]	
5	(6)	**Playdays**	(BBC)
		49,238 (-7,647) [ABC Jan-Jun 95]	
6	(7)	**Fun to Learn with Thomas**	(Redan)
		48,525 (-1,720) [ABC Jan-Jun 95]	
7	(8)	**Noddy**	(BBC)
		42,702 (-7,357) [ABC Jan-Jun 95]	
8	(new)	**Pingu**	(BBC)
		42,685 [ABC Jan-Jun 95]	
9	(new)	**Doctor Who**	(Marvel)
		17,212 [ABC Jan-Jun 95]	

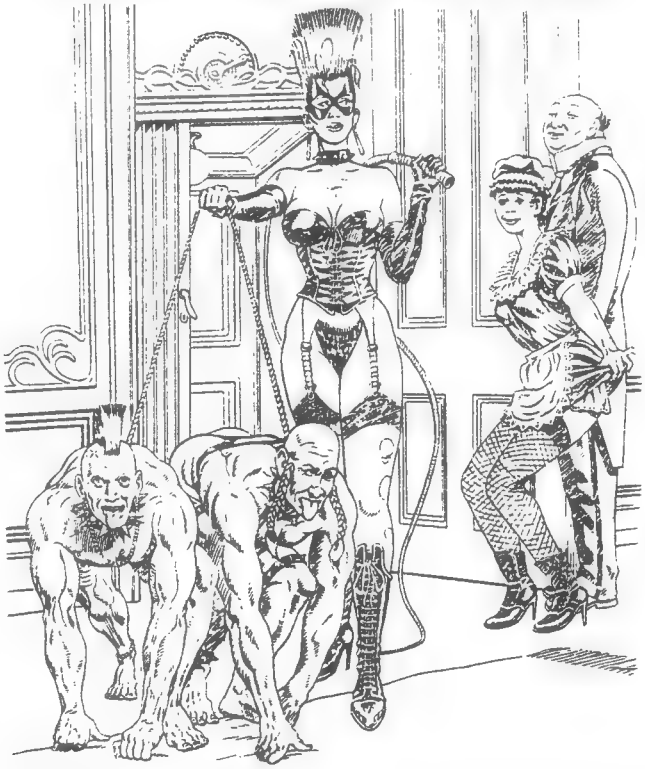
Titan's UK Mask Adventures

TITAN Magazines' spring campaign begins on February 22, with **The Mask Adventures Comic**, based on the comic-turned-film-turned-cartoon character. *Report by Alan Woolcombe*

The 32-page, full-colour monthly is aimed at young readers, rather than the original, darker **Mask** comic. Titan is reprinting Dark Horse's original **The Mask Adventures**, "Virtually as they appear in the States" admitted editor John Freeman. "**The Mask Adventures** is more warm-hearted than the original books and is definitely not as extreme — it's much closer to the film." continued Freeman. "All the strips are written by Michael Eury and are drawn by Neil Vokes, Jay Geldhof and Matt Webb. The covers are by Bruce (**Batman Adventures**) Timm and for our first issue he is actually reworking the cover for the British edition — the cover of the American version has guns all over the place and it's not quite suitable for Tesco's!"

Although all the strips will be reprints, there will be add-ons for British tastes; puzzle pages, features, competitions — along with cover-mounted giveaway masks on the first two issues. The first issue is cover priced 99p, rising to £1.20 from issue two.

Talbot's Tekno Shadowdeath



PROVING that British creators can succeed in the US when there is little originated work in the UK, Bryan Talbot is writing a new series for Big Entertainment.

Shadowdeath is the title of a new six-part series following on from the critically acclaimed, but cancelled, **Teknophage** comic.

The series, written by Talbot, pencilled by David Pugh (his first US work) and inked by Tim Perkins, is an SF action adventure with homage to the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

Talbot said "It's a dark superhero title about a terrorist, or freedom fighter, depending on your point of view, who is loose in the Phage Building and has issued a death-threat against the Phage — a declaration of war. I wanted to write a game of cat and mouse that increases the stakes each issue," Talbot continued, "I want to crank up the excitement, so that by issue three it has become an edge-of-the-seat ride to the finish. I think the series is quite Kirbyesque in a way and has lots of Victorian retro SF."

This is Talbot's first comic script which he hasn't drawn himself, but he's happy with his art team. "Dave and Tim are doing a fantastic job. It's about time someone else did the hard work! It's a lot easier to write 'a cast of thousands' than to draw them. Writers can work on half a dozen projects while artists get stuck on one for months on end."

As if to prove this, Talbot is also writing **Weird Romance,** a story arc for the forthcoming **The Dreaming** series (scheduled for late '96). The story is being drawn by Dave Taylor. Talbot is also supplying seven pages of pencils for the last issue of **The Sandman**, these will be inked by Charles Vess.

After the scripts for **Shadow death** and **The Dreaming** and a number of signings and conventions in the spring, Talbot wants to devote his full attention to writing and drawing a new **Luther Arkwright** story.

Top Brits high-profile projects

THE PAST several months have been busy for both Neil Gaiman and Barry Windsor-Smith.

Gaiman has just finished his award-winning **The Sandman** series and is currently working on the new **Death** mini-series and a new summer project with Charles Vess called **Stardust**.

Gaiman is also hard at work with projects outside of the comics medium including *The Day I Swapped my Dad for Two Goldfish*, a children's book; the CD *Warning: Contains Language* and the BBC television series *Neverwhere*.

Gaiman said of his forthcoming fantasy comic series with Charles Vess, "**[Stardust]** is a novella set in a little English village on the border of Faerie-land. The village is called Wall because there's a large wall the villagers built up and on the other side is Faerie and you aren't allowed through." The series is due in the summer.

Barry Windsor-Smith's new comic **Storyteller** is due from Dark Horse Comics in the summer. Each month the over-sized comic series will feature new installments of his three new series, *The Freebooters*, *Young Gods* and *The Paradoxman*.

Windsor-Smith said, "**Storyteller** will include a lot of other attractions as well, we'll feature production sketches as well as some of my own favourite and never-before-published art from my personal files."

PUBLISHER index

*IN ANSWER to continual requests for details concerning comics publishers, the **Comics International** Publisher's Index covers all major newsstand and direct sale mainstream comics publishers. For information about small press titles, readers are refered to the Announcements section of our classified listings at the end of each issue.*

US PUBLISHERS

While not exhaustive, the following are the major North American comics publishers:

■ **ARCHIE COMIC PUBLICATIONS**, 325 Fayette Ave., Mamaroneck, NY 10543 (humour titles) 001 914 381 5155

■ **AARDVARK-VANAHEIM**, PO Box 1674 Station C, Kitchner, Ontario N2G 4R2 Canada. (Cerebus)

■ **AC COMICS**, PO Box 1216, Longwood, Fl 32752 (adventure & western titles)

■ **BIG ENTERTAINMENT**, 2255 Glades Road, Suite 237W, Boca Raton, Fl 33431-7383 (s-f/fantasy comics) 001 407 998 800

■ **BONGO ENTERTAINMENT** 1999 Ave of the Stars, Los Angeles, Ca 90607 (Simpsons-related humour) 001 310 788 1367

■ **BROADWAY COMICS**, 1285 Ave of the Americas, 35th Floor, NY, NY 10016 (adventure) 001 212 554 4588

■ **CALIBER PRESS**, 11904 Farmington Road, Livonia, Mi 48150 (b&w adventure titles) 001 313 425 7930

■ **DARK HORSE COMICS**, 10956 S. E. Main St., Milwaukie, Or 97222 (adventure, licensed & manga titles) 001 503 652 8815

■ **DC COMICS**, 1700 Broadway, New York, NY 10019 (adventure, plus licensed, humour, Vertigo & Paradox Press imprints) 001 212 636 5400

■ **DISNEY COMICS**, 500 S Buena Vista St, Burbank, Ca 91521 (humour titles) 001 818 507 5739

■ **DRAWN & QUARTERLY**, 5550 Jeanne Mance St #16, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2V 4K6 (b&w biog)

■ **FANTAGRAPHIC BOOKS**, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, Wa 98115 (b&w adventure, biog & Eros adult titles) 001 206 524 1967

■ **GLADSTONE PUBLISHING**, Box 2079, Prescott, Ariz 86302 (humour, licensed) 001 602 776 1300

■ **HARVEY COMICS Entertainments**, 100 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, Ca 91401 (humour titles) 001 310 451 3377

■ **HEAVY METAL**, 584 Broadway, Suite 608, New York, NY 10012 (adult fantasy)

■ **IMAGE COMICS**, 2400 E Katella Ave, Suite 1065, Anaheim, Ca 92806 (adventure titles) 001 714 6344644

■ **KITCHEN SINK PRESS**, 320 Riverside Drive, Northampton, Mass 01060 (adventure, humour & licensed, inc Tundra) 001 413 586 9525

■ **LAST GASP**, 777 Florida, San Francisco, Ca 94110 (underground) 001 415 824 6636

■ **MALIBU COMICS Entertainment**, 26707 W. Agoura Rd., Calabasas, Ca 91302 (adventure, licensed + Bravura titles) 001 818 878 7400

■ **MARVEL Entertainment Group**, 387 Park Ave South, New York, NY 10016 (adventure, humour & licensed titles) 001 212 696 0808

■ **MILESTONE MEDIA**, 119 West 23rd St., Suite 409, New York, NY 10011 (adventure titles) 001 212 522 7150

■ **MIRAGE PUBLICATIONS**, PO Box 486, Northampton, Ma 01061 (humour)

■ **NBM PUBLICATIONS,** 185 Madison Ave, Suite 1502, New York, NY 10016 (adult fantasy graphic novels & magazines)

■ **NOW COMICS**, 60 Revere Drive, Northbrook, Ill 60062 (licensed adventure & humour titles) 001 708 205 2950

■ **REBEL STUDIOS**, 4716 Judy Court, Sacramento, Ca 95841. (adventure b&w titles) 001 916 443 7629

■ **RIP OFF PRESS**, PO Box 4686, Auburn, Ca 95604 (underground comix)

■ **SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS**, 979 S. Bascom Ave, San Jose, Ca 95128 (fantasy b&w) 001 408 279 0451

■ **TOPPS COMICS**, 254 36th St., Brooklyn, NY 11232 (adventure) 001 212 514 8190

■ **VALIANT/VOYAGER Communications**, 275 7th Ave, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10001 (adventure) 001 212 366 4900

■ **VIZ COMICS**, PO Box 77010, San Francisco, Ca 94107 (translated manga titles)

■ **WaRP GRAPHICS**, 43 Haight Ave, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603 (Elquest titles) 001 914 473 9277

UK PUBLISHERS

The following are the major UK newsstand comics and graphic novel publishers:

■ **BOXTREE BOOKS**, 2nd Floor, Broadwall House, 21 Broadwall, London SE1 (licensed graphic novels) 0171 928 9696

■ **DC THOMSON**, Albert Square, Dundee DD1 9QJ (humour, adventure & girls' titles)

■ **FANNY**, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (women's comics) 0181 969 2945

■ **FLEETWAY EDITIONS**, 25-31 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SU (adventure, humour, licensed) 0171 344 6400

■ **JOHN BROWN PUBLISHING**, The Boathouse, Crabtree Lane, Fulham, London SW6 (Viz) 0171 381 6007

■ **KNOCKABOUT COMICS**, 10 Acklam Rd, London W10 5QZ (humour & underground comix, graphic novels) 0181 969 2945

■ **MANDARIN BOOKS**, Reed Consumer Books, Michelin House, 81 Fulham Road, London SW3 (licensed graphic novels) 0171 581 9393

■ **MANGA PUBLISHING**, 40 St Peter's Rd, London W6 9BD (fantasy magazines & comics) 0181 748 9000

■ **MARVEL COMICS (UK)**, Arundel House, 13-15 Arundel Street, London WC2R 3DX (humour, adventure, licensed) 0171 208 4500

■ **THE REDAN COMPANY**, Appleton House, 139 King Street, London W6 9JG (pre-school humour titles) 0181 563 1563

■ **SAVOY BOOKS**, 279 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4EW (adult fantasy titles) 0161 833 2664

■ **TITAN BOOKS**, 42-44 Dolben Street, London SE1 OUP (licensed graphic novels, magazines & comics) 0171 620 0200

■ **VICTOR GOLLANCZ**, Cassell PLC, Wellington House, 125 The Strand, London WC2R 0BB (graphic novels) 0171 420 5555

ADVANCE LISTINGS: UK

With the majority of UK-produced comics, trade paperbacks and graphic novels not readily available, the following listing of material to be published next month gives readers the opportunity to order specific titles through newsagents, bookshops or specialist outlets. As such, only titles nationally distributed through federated news outlets are included. All dates, prices and information are assumed to be accurate as provided by publishers. Late shipping, cancellations and changes in content will be detailed in future issues of ***Comics International.***

Compiled by Kerry-Ann Hurley

Key to abbreviations used:

1 & 2 + 3	=	*Writer & penciller + inker*
wkly	=	*weekly frequency*
ftnly	=	*fortnightly frequency*
mthly	=	*monthly frequency*
o/s	=	*oversized, larger than A4*
dgst	=	*small, approx A5 sized*
sqbd	=	*perfect bound; squared spine; without staples*
b&w	=	*black & white contents*
clr	=	*full colour contents*
pc	=	*part-colour contents*
gn	=	*graphic novel*
thbk	=	*trade hardback edition*
tpbk	=	*trade paperback, squarebound, comic size*
Xpgs	=	*number of interior pages*
Mature	=	*recommended for mature readers, may contain nudity, sex and/or extreme violence.*

TITLES ON SALE: FEBRUARY

ACREFORCE

O Skank 7 (bi-mthly; various) Adult humour comic for the black community, featuring regulars: Mary Mampy, Scotland Yardie and The Fugitive. Mature. 44pgs b&w £1.25

ARF CARTOONS

O Smut: The Alternative Comic 65 (mthly; various) Adult humour comic strips featuring Roy Chubby Brown and other regulars. Mature. 40pgs pc £1.25

BOXTREE BOOKS

O Ranma ½ Books 1 & 2 (tpbk; Takahashi) Collecting the manga action/humour stories about a boy who becomes a girl upon contact with water. 192pgs b&w . . £5.99

O Star Wars: River of Chaos (tpbk; Simonson + Bridgman & Richardson) *Rescheduled from November.* Set between *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back.* 128pgs clr £8.99

JANUARY LATE ADDITIONS:

O Spider-Man: Greatest Villains (tpbk; Lee & McFarlane) A compilation of US strips featuring Peter Parker, the original Spider-Man, and his battles against sinister super-villains: Hobgoblin, Venom, Scorpion, et al. 176pgs clr . £9.99

O Star Trek: Deep Space Nine — Dax Comet (tpbk; Altman & Davis + Pallot) Combining the two-part story *Dax Comet* with the one-shot *Lightstorm* and so bringing to a close the story started in the Cardassians vs Klingons tale *Hearts and Minds.* 96pgs clr £8.99

DC THOMSON

O Beano 2794-2797 (wkly; various) Humour strips including: Dennis the Menace & Gnasher and Minnie the Minx. 24pgs clr £0.38

O Beano Comic Library Monthly 333-334 (2 per mth; dgst; various) Extra-long strips featuring the **Beano** characters. 68pgs pc £0.50

O Beano Superstars 50 (mthly; various) One complete full-length strip per issue. 48pgs clr . . £1.10

O Bunty 1985-1988 (wkly; various) Picture and photo stories plus features. 32pgs pc £0.50

O Bunty Picture Library 412-413 (2 per mth; dgst; various) One full-length comic strip per issue. 68pgs b/w £0.50

O Commando Action & Adventure Stories 2923-2930 (8 per mth; dgst; various) War strips set mostly in World War II. 68pgs b&w . £0.50

O Dandy 2827-2830 (wkly; various) Humour anthology including regulars: Desperate Dan and Korky the Cat. 24pgs clr £0.38

O Dandy Comic Library Monthly 309-310 (2 per mth; various) Extra long strips of the favourite **Dandy** characters. 68pgs pc £0.50

O Football Picture Story Monthly 233-234 (2 per mth; various) Comic strip soccer stories. 68pgs pc £0.50

O Mandy & Judy 245-248 (wkly; various) Comic strips plus features and pet pin-ups. 32pgs pc . . £0.50

O Mandy & Judy Picture Library 234-235 (2 per mth; dgst; various) One full-length comic story per issue. 68pg b&w £0.50

FELDON PRODUCTIONS

O Sweet FA 12 (mthly, various) Football humour comic strips and spoof newspaper-style articles. Mature. 52pgs pc £0.99

FLEETWAY EDITIONS

CANCELLED **Bugs Bunny** (mthly)

O Buster 29-30 (ftnly; various) Humour comic featuring Buster, Chalky and others. 32pgs clr £0.80

O Buster Classics 2 (4-wkly; various) Reprinting the best of **Buster.** 64pg b&w £1.10

CANCELLED **Big Value Comic**

O Classic Judge Dredd 8 (mthly; various) This month features: *The Art of Kenny Who?* (Wagner + Grant & Kennedy) and other Dredd stories; a special Cam Kennedy tribute cover by Calum Alexander Watt; and two free Judge Dredd postcards. 68pgs clr £1.50

CANCELLED **Flintstones** mthly

O Judge Dredd: Lawman of the Future 16 (ftnly; various) Starring Judge Dredd in *Thirst* (Furman & O'Ready), plus the continuations of *Cybernetic Jungle* (Morrison & Senior) and *Dragon's Lair* (Morrison & Ronald). Cover by G. Senior. 36pgs. clr £1.10

O Judge Dredd: Lawman of the Future 17 (ftnly; various) Featuring *Cybernetic Jungle* (Morrison & Senior), plus new stories: *The Cursed Earth* (Morrison & O'Ready) and *Wish You Were Here* (O'Donoghue & Sanders). Cover art by G. Senior. 36pgs clr £1.10

O Judge Dredd Megazine Vol 3 #15 (mthly; various) Anthology including: *Judge Dredd: Mondo Simp* (Smith & Marshall), *Shimura: Dragonfire* (Morrison & Fraser) and *The Great Arsoli* (Wagner + Grant & Bisley). Cover art by Paul Marshall. 52pgs clr £2.00

O Mickey & Friends 57-60 (wkly; various) Comic strips featuring Disney's Mickey Mouse, Uncle Scrooge, et al. 32pgs clr . . . £0.80

O Sonic the Comic 71-72 (ftnly; various) Features, game reviews and games related strips. 36pgs clr £1.20

O Tom & Jerry 24 (mthly; various) Comic strip humour from the cat and mouse duo. 44pgs clr £1.00

O 2000AD 978-981 (wkly; various) This month features the conclusions of: *Kid Cyborg* (Long & McCarthy), *Flesh* (Abnett & Erskine + Jacob), *Venus Blue Jeans: Frag Shell* (Abnett & Coleby + Cox) and *Darkness Visible* (Abadzis & Ridgway + Hart). Plus the continuation of the Dredd saga *The Pit* (Wagner & MacNeil + Craddock + Sullivan + Hadley) and new stories: *Janus Psi Division* (Millar & Johnson), *Venus Blue Jeans: Stealth* (White & Flint), *Cannon Fodder* (Long & Weston) and *Sinister Dexter* (Abnett & Millgate). Issue 980 marks **2000AD's** 19th anniversary and is promoted with a free birthday card and a cover by Sean Phillips. 36pgs clr . . . £1.00

JANUARY LATE ADDITIONS:

NEW **Buster Classics 1** (4-wkly; various) Reprinting the best of **Buster:** Oddball, Joker, X-Ray Specs, etc. 64pg b&w . £1.10

MAI COMICS

O Spit 38 (mthly; various) Adult humour strips featuring Teenage Mum, Ugly Dudley, The Twats Nextdoor and others. Mature. 52pgs pc £1.25

MANGA PUBLISHING

O Manga Mania 32 (mthly; various) The latest chapters of *Akira* (Otamo) *Striker* (Tajashige & Minagawa) and *Black Magic* (Shirow). Plus anime and manga news and an extensive feature on the latest hit video from Buichi Terasawa — *Goku: Midnight Eye.* 132pgs pc £2.50

O Mortal Kombat 7 (mthly; various) Beginning a new story: *Battlewave*, plus features, tips, a pull-out poster and a free badge. 36pgs clr . . . . . *price increase* £1.25

O Mortal Kombat Tournament Edition 2 (bi-mthly; various) The fighters from Mortal Kombat take on the warriors from the second game, MK II. 76pgs clr £1.95

O Space Precinct 7 (*now mthly*; various) The third chapter of *True Believers* (Jowett & Manley), plus part one of *On the Beat* (Millar & Macintosh). Also includes features, news and a cut-away poster of the Space Bike. Cover by Kev Walker and free *Space Precinct* pogs. 36pgs clr £1.25

CANCELLED **Tank Girl** mthly

O X-Files 10 (mthly; various) A new trilogy begins with *Feelings of Unreality* (Petrucha & Adlard), plus exclusive features and news, an interview with writer/producer Howard Gordan and a chance to win *The X-Files* audio tapes. Cover by Miran Kim. 36pgs clr £1.25

MARVEL (UK)

O Amazing X-Men 2 (4-wkly; various) Reprinting various tales from Marvel US's top-selling X-books. 44pgs clr £1.20

O Astonishing Spider-Man 5 (4-wkly; various) Reprints three US Spider-Man titles. 72pgs clr £1.99

O Beavis and Butt-Head 21 (mthly; various) Comic strips featuring the cult MTV boys. 32pgs clr . . £1.20

O Casper The Friendly Ghost 7 (4-wkly; various) Casper comic strips, plus features and activities. 36pgs clr . . . *price increase* £1.10

O Doctor Who Magazine 235 (mthly; various) Features, news, plus a new comic strip. 52pgs pc £2.95

O Essential X-Men 5 (4-wkly; various) Anthology reprinting stories from US X-Men titles: **Uncanny X-Men, Wolverine, Bishop** and **Giant Size X-Men,** plus features. 72pgs clr £1.99

O Power Rangers 18 & 19 (ftnly; various) Comic strips and features based on the popular Sky TV series. 32pgs clr . . . *price increase* £1.10

O Spectacular Spider-Man 6 (4-wkly; various) Reprint of a full issue of a Marvel US Spider-Man title. 32pgs clr . . . *price increase* £1.10

CANCELLED **X-Men** ftnly

JANUARY LATE ADDITIONS:

NEW **Amazing X-Men 1** (4-wkly; various) Reprinting various tales from Marvel US's X-books. 44pgs clr £1.20

THE REDAN COMPANY

O I Love to Read Batman 8 (mthly; various) Comic strips featuring DC superheroes, plus posters, hero files and an eight page activity section. 32pgs clr . . £1.10

TITAN BOOKS

NEW **The Mask Adventures** (mthly; Eury & Vokes + Geldhof + Webb) Reprinting Dark Horse's Mask strips based on the children's animated TV show. Plus features, puzzles, activity pages, etc, and a free face mask. Cover by Bruce (**Batman Adventures**) Timm. 32pgs clr *introductory price* £0.99

O Star Trek Monthly #13 (mthly, various) Featuring interviews with Leonard Nimoy, Mark (Sarek) Lenard and Kirstie (Saavik) Ally. Plus features, the third part of the comic strip *Convergence* and a free gift. 68pgs clr £2.95

ZIT COMICS

O Zit 64 (mthly; various) Adult humour strips including The Sex Files, Billy No Mates, The Morons and others. Mature. 48pgs pc £1.40

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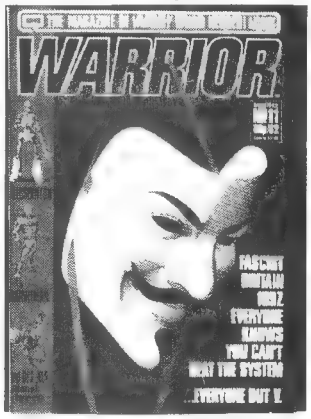

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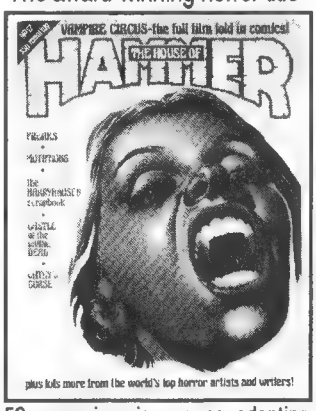
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Early issues of the country's top sf & fantasy monthly, published under Quality's original imprint, *Starburst Magazines Limited*.

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#3 (Logan's Run, CE3K, Quark, Harrison Ford interview, Trek, *no strips*) **3.50**
#4 (First Marvel issue: Hulk tv feature, Tolkien, Excaliber, War of Worlds, *no strips*) **5.00**
#5 (Superman, Dark Star, Carpenter, Doug Trumbull interview) **3.50**

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MIRACLEMAN

Repackaged by Quality Communications as a full colour 32 page comicbook for US publishers Eclipse, **Miracleman** reprinted the award-winning *Marvelman* **Warrior** work of Alan Moore, Garry Leach and Alan Davis for American comic fans.

#1 (US edtn; Moore, Leach & Davis) **£2.50**
#1 (UK edtn; Moore, Leach & Davis) **£1.50**

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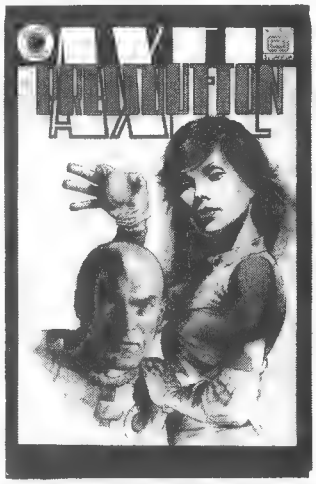

In addition to **Brian Bolland's Black Book** and the two-issue **John Bolton's Halls of Horror** (now out of print), Quality also packaged for Eclipse the **Pressbutton** 6-issue full-colour mini-series, featuring the work of Pedro Henry, Steve Dillon, Brian Bolland, Alan Davis, Mick Austin and Cam Kennedy.

#1 (Henry, Dillon & Bolland) **£2.50**
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Prior to the recent DC series and the Fleetway reprints, Quality produced a range of US sized colour comics in the mid-1980s including the **2000AD** work of Wagner, Grant, Mills, Bolland, Dillon, Gibbons, Moore, Davis, O'Neill, Talbot, McMahon and Gibson. The following are still available:

Judge Dredd v1 #35 ..... **2.00**
Judge Dredd v2 #1-3 (Dillon) **£1.50**
Rogue Trooper #1-5 (Gibbons) **£1.00**
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All the above magazines are still available direct from the publisher, trade orders welcomed.
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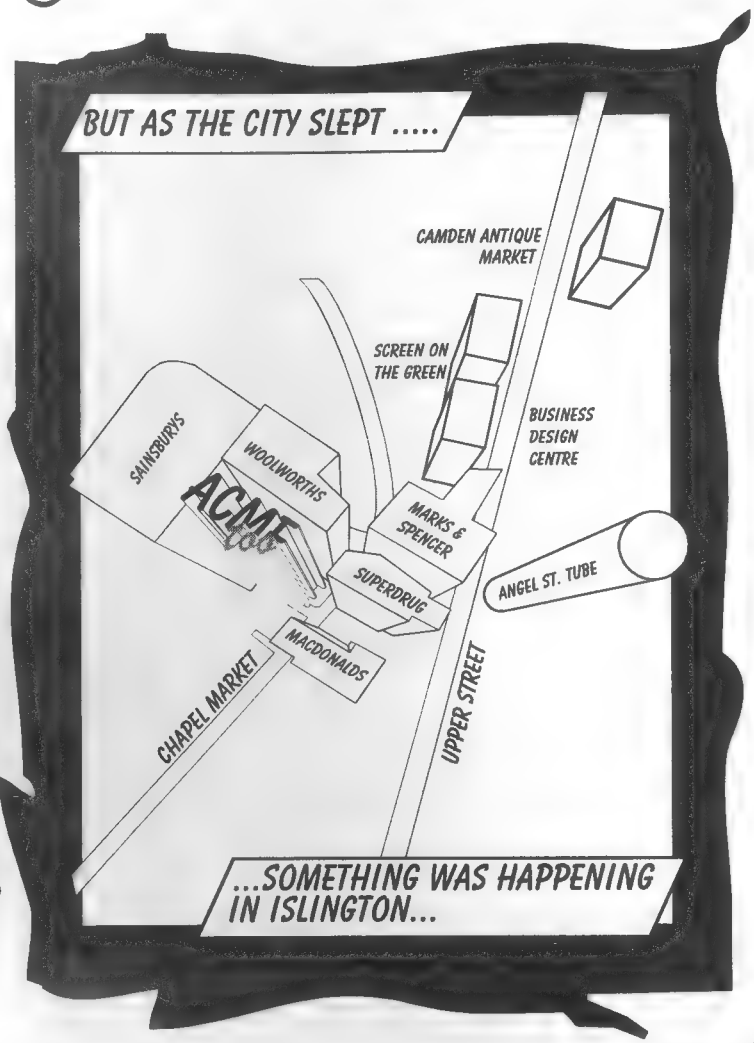

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mEDIAFILE

Associate editor Sarah Bolesworth looks at recent media coverage of comics and related product

THE EVENT that has caused tremours in the bedrock of the American comics market — the implosion of Marvel Entertainment — has attracted little attention in the UK media.

The only notable coverage of the company's £16 million restructuring charge and 275 job losses was in the **Daily Express**'s City section (6.1.'96).

The **Express** correctly focused on one of the anomolies of Marvel's radical shrinkage: "The loss took Wall Street by surprise and sent Marvel Enterntainment's shares down 50 cents to $12.50."

How did Marvel's loss take Wall Street by surprise, exactly? As Steven Hill, research analyst for broker L H Alton & Co, commented: "It grew too fast in too many directions — software, film and comics."

For entertainment industry analysts, the warning signs were clear from the start. Ronald Perelman, as **Comics International** pointed out, was not a man with publishing in his blood. It was almost certain that this unreconstructed Eighties' raider was going to asset-strip Marvel — an early pointer being the loading of Perelman's debt accrued in buying Marvel into the company itself.

Having effectively made Marvel pay to have its ownership transferred to himself, Perelman then scotched Marvel's only hope for a leap into the entertainment-supernova league by demoting publishing guru Terry Stewart.

The breakneck speed of acquisition and expansion under Perelman was matched only by the rapidity of Marvel Comics' loss of creative direction and credibility. With so much money moving out of the company in so many directions, the core operation — the creation of intellectual property in the form of comics and characters — was quickly starved of resources.

But then what could Perelman know about the entertainment business? A man who deals in cosmetics (Revlon) and specialises in corporate assault would know a lot about artifice, but very little about what makes great comics.

That distinctive Perelman signature will be a stain on Marvel's image, if it remains an independent company: lots of front but very little substance. And substance is exactly what Marvel Comics needs most now.

Shredded in '95

In a round-up of films in **Variety**'s Hall of Shame for 1995, *Judge Dredd* featured along with *Cutthroat Island*, *Showgirls* and *The Scarlet Letter*. These films, wrote Adam Dawtrey (8-14.1.'96), were "a string of mega-flops that were heavily financed by foreign distributors, savaged by critics and shunned by US audiences".

Batman Forever was the "top individual grosser" at $184 million (home box-office income, comprising the US and Canada), "proving that mass audiences want something familiar".

Looking forward to 1996 releases, **Variety** reported that Warner Bros are "planning another series of Batman movies". With *The X-Men* ("a bigscreen comic book"), 1996 will provide — according to **Variety** — "the true test for Fox's speciality divisions".

But will *The X-Men* get an R rating, as *Judge Dredd* did, and be nominated for **Variety**'s 1996 Hall of Shame?

The Judge's celluloid future may not, concedes **Variety**, be entirely bleak: "*Judge Dredd* certainly wasn't a disaster in foreign [income terms], scoring well in the United Kingdom, France, Italy and the Far East, and likely to go well on video."

Hollywood is slowly getting used to the idea that there may be a disparity between domestic and foreign takings. But it still seems to be the case that unless a home box-office killing is predicted, producers are unlikely to be losing any sleep over the chance to make *Judge Dredd II*.

Fans are sane, it's official

Do *you* show "obsessive and addictive behavioural patterns"? If you do (show me someone who doesn't and I'll give you a tenner), it means that you fit the British Psychological Society's profile of a fanatic (fan).

It was revealed at the society's December annual conference that questionnaires from the two last Star Trek conventions had been collated to ascertain levels of sanity among fans. But analysts were disappointed to discover that only a few respondants were actually certifiable; the majority seemed to be "motivated by entertainment, fun and social contact with others".

Strange, that.

Who censures the censors?

When Republican Senate Majority Leader Senator Bob Dole attacked Hollywood for "corrupting the nation's children" at a charity dinner given in LA last summer, he probably had little more in mind than a soundbite appearance the same night on CNN.

He found it preferable to blame the media for this so-called corruption rather than acknowledge that a drop in moral standards is related to the fragmentation of society caused by boom-bust capitalism. Why pass up a highly visible target when the truth, that kids are corrupt because the market dominates their culture, is so unpallatable?

The good Senator's bold and vituperative rant added weight to the right-wing backlash that has plagued American liberals (including Bill Clinton himself) since the Congressional election campaign of 1994.

Dole's long-cherished dream of censoring the US media at last came to officially sanctioned fruition this month. Issues such as kids' viewing habits are, from now on, to be a question of government control, not parental discretion.

According to **The Hollywood Reporter** (9.1.'96), the US Supreme Court in Washington supported a ruling that allows federal regulators to control "steamy movies, racy talk shows and other adult fare". Similarities with the McCarthyite purges of the Fifties are hard to ignore — and they contributed to the atmosphere of censorship which promoted the establishment of the Comics Code.

What does the Supreme Court consider to be "adult fare"? Indecency (unlike obscenity, as **The Hollywood Reporter** pointed out) is protected by the US constitution's first amendment (the right of free speech). Yet the court supported an appeal court's ruling that found "the government has a compelling interest in protecting children under the age of 18 from exposure to indecent broadcasts".

Ironically it was broadcasters, publishers, civil liberties and children's rights groups — along with poet Allen Ginsberg — who pursued the case to Washington. What they had assumed would be a matter of constitutional law turned out to be a political snare, with the Moral Majority — who nobody dares mention any more — winning the day.

But of the fact that Senator Dole's anti-media stance was influential in the Supreme Court's decision there can be little doubt. Referring to his concerted and persistent attacks, National Association of Broadcasters' spokesman Walt Wurfel commented that it was "pretty clear" that Dole is waging a war against the industry.

Thanks to Dole and others like him, free speech is now apparently up for ad-hoc review and nothing is guaranteed, least of all the availability of violent or hot-babe comics. So get your bad and nasty issues while you can.

Flip in Elle

Shocking to relate, bad and nasty comics are busy eating their way into the hearts and minds of incorruptable youngsters (hate that word!) on this side of the ocean. **Elle** magazine's 17-year-old babe — sorry, *model* of the month, Jodie Kidd, admitted to a taste for reading **Freak Brothers** comics. "I love it, don't you?" she said. Her Majesty's Customs should watch that one — she's definitely the sort that could corrupt the nation's children.

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34	VFN- £5.00	258	£3.50
Warlock		259	£5.00
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10	VFN- £12.00	262	£2.25
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FRAME TO FRAME

The Edge of Forever's Mike Conroy overviews the film and television industry's on-off love affair with the comics medium, providing the latest news from options to releases.

THANKS to the people at Marvel Films, we've now got a complete rundown on the current state of play regarding the company's projects.

With all the following intended to be live action, 20th Century-Fox has these major features in the works:

The X-Men
(Producers: Donner, Shuler-Donner)
Iron Man
(Langley Productions & Stephen Chao)
Fantastic Four
(1492 Films/Chris Columbus)
Daredevil
(1492 Films/Chris Columbus; Director: Carlo Carlei).

New Line Cinema is also bringing Marvel characters to the screen:

Ghost Rider
(Producer: Pacific Western & Gale Anne Hurd)
Blade
(Peter Frankfurt)
Venom and Carnage
(Langley Productions & Stephen Chao)

At least we now know who will *not* be the villain(s) in the *Spider-Man* movie which, according to Marvel, is still with Carolco. Jim Cameron's Lightstorm Productions remains in situ as producer, and the man himself is still set to direct.

Obviously, given Carolco's well publicised financial troubles this option could be on the move at any time, but at least Cameron remains committed to the project.

The Silver Surfer has taken up residence at Fox Family Films with Constantin Films as producer, while Universal Pictures is once again going to make an attempt to bring the *Incredible Hulk* to the silver screen, produced by Pacific Western/ Gale Anne Hurd.

Columbia has taken *Dr Strange* under its wing (to be produced by Brill - Stein - Grey Entertainment). The super-team of Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen (aka Dreamworks SKG), in tandem with producers The Frederick S. Pierce Company have *Mort the Dead Teenager* in the works. (If your response that last entry was "Huh?", let me put you mind at rest by telling you that Mort appeared in his own four-issue series from late 1993 to early 1994. What his attraction is or was to Spielberg and company is another matter altogether!)

Finally, with regard to film at least, Pressman is the producer of *Cage*, although no studio has as yet attached itself to the project.

Generation X TV pilot

THE television news of the moment is the *Generation X* feature, which is now set to air on the Fox network on Tuesday, February 20, at 8.00pm.

By all accounts, the network is anticipating big things from what may be seen as a pilot for a series of TV movies.

Also currently with Fox are projects to turn both **Nick Fury** and the **Black Widow** into TV features while NBC and CBS are working to do the same with **The Punisher** and **She-Hulk** respectively.

Screen snippets

TO CLOSE with some non-Marvel news: Don Chin, publisher of Entity Comics, informs us that Dino Delaurentis (producer of the *Conan* movies and the 1976 remake of *King Kong*, among many others) took an option on **Metal Militia** over the Christmas period.

Miramax Films (a subsidiary of the Walt Disney company and the film-maker behind *The Crow*) has acquired from Tekno Comix the rights for three properties for feature film and television production: **Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger, Neil Gaiman's Mr Hero the Newmatic Man** and **Gene Roddenberry's Lost Universe**. However the first production from this alliance will be a film-to-comic adaptation, with Tekno producing the comics version of *From Dusk till Dawn*, the new movie directed by current wunderkind Robert Rodriquez, from a screenplay by Quentin Tarantino.

Gramercy Pictures has announced that *Barb Wire*, the Pamela Anderson movie based on the Dark Horse comic heroine will be released to US cinemas on Friday, April 26. No UK release details as yet.

In conclusion, I suppose by now you know that Lois Lane finally gets to marry Clark Kent in an episode of *Lois & Clark: the New Adventures of Superman*, to be shown in the UK later this year.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

MANY magazines carry listings of genre movies currently at some stage of production. However, quite often they appear to include speculative entries. Our listing, while not as comprehensive as some others, contains only those movies that we have been able to confirm from more than one source. As time goes by, we will investigate those missing projects and include them only when we are certain of our facts.

It is worth remembering that many producers take up options on comic-book characters and/or concepts, but only a small percentage ever actually make it into production and many of those that do take years to reach the screen. For example, Judge Dredd's journey to the screen took 15 years!

IN PRODUCTION

THE ADVENTURES OF BATMAN AND ROBIN — Executive Producers: Jean MacCurdy & Tom Ruegger; Producers: Alan Burnett, Eric Radomski, Bruce Timm & Paul Dini; Casting: Andrea Romano. Warner Bros Animation.

BARB WIRE — Based on the Dark Horse character. Cast: Pamela Anderson, Temuera Morrison, Jack Noseworthy & Victoria Rowell; Executive Producer: Steve Golin; Producers: Mike Richardson, Todd Moyer & Brad Wyman; Director: Adam Rifkin; Screenplay: Chuck Pfarrar & Adam Rifkin. Polygram Filmed Entertainment/Propaganda Films/Dark Horse Entertainment. Shooting in Los Angeles started May 23, 1995 (see above).

FANTASTIC FOUR — Animated series starring Marvel's first super-team. Executive Producers: Avi Arad, Stan Lee & Rick Ungar; Supervising Producer: Tom Tataranowicz; Producer: Larry Houston; Editors: Cydne Clark, Steve Granat & Glenn Leopold. Marvel Films Animation.

FIST OF THE NORTHSTAR — Based on the manga series by Buronson & Tetsuo Hara; already adapted into an anime movie. Director: Tony Randal; Cast: Gary Daniels, Costas Mandylor, Chris Penn, Isako Washio & Melvyn van Peebles. Zeta Entertainment.

GENERATION X — Live-action television film by MT2 Services Productions in association with Marvel Films. Director: Jack Sholder; Cast: Finola Hughes, Jeremy Ratchford, Matt Frewer, Augustin Rodriguez, Bumper Robinson. Screenplay: Eric Blakeney. Producer: David Roessel. Executive Producers: Stan Lee, Avi Arad, Bruce Sallan and Eric Blakeney.

G.I. JOE: EXTREME — It's always been a toy, it became an animated series and a long-running comic (from Marvel). Now it's back as an animated series and a new comic (this time from Dark Horse)! Executive Producers: C.J. Kettler, Joe Bacal, Tom Griffin & Jean Chalopin; Writer: Jean Chalapin; Story Editor: Buzz Dixon; Sunbow Productions Inc in association with Creativite Et Developement.

IRON MAN — An animated series featuring Marvel's armoured avenger. Executive Producers: Avi Arad, Stan Lee & Rick Ungar; Supervising Producer: Tom Tataranowicz; Producer: Yi-Chih Chen; Editors: Greg Johnson, Eric Lewald, Julia Lewald & Dean Stefan. Marvel Films Animation.

LOIS & CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN — Executive Producer: Robert Singer; Co-executive Producers: Eugenie Ross-Leming & Brad Buckner; Supervising Producers: John McNamara & Chris Ruppenthal; Producers: Jimmy Simons & Phil Sgriccia; Co-Producers: Grant Rosenberg, Jim Michaels & Chris Long; Casting: Barbara Miller & Lorna Johnson. Warner Bros Television in association with December 3rd Productions.

MAD TV — Primarily live-action TV series based around the humour magazine. Executive Producers: Quincy Jones, David Salzman, W. Fax Bahr, Adam Small & Steven Haft; Supervising Producer: John Blanchard; Producer: James Jones; Director: John Blanchard; Casting: Julie Mossberg. Quincy Jones/ David Salzman Entertainment.

THE MASK — Animated series featuring the eponymous hero from Dark Horse. Executive Producers: Phil Roman, Tom Griffin, Joe Bacal, C.J. Kettler, Mike Richardson & Bob Friedman; Producer: Gary Hartle Co-Producer & Story Editor: Duane Cappizzi; Executives in Charge of Production: Bill Schultz & Carole Weiztman. Film Roman Inc in association with Sunbow Productions Inc & New Line TV.

THE PHANTOM — Lee Falk's The Ghost Who Walks comes to the movies for the second time. Producers: Robert Evans & Alan Ladd Jr; Director: Simon Wincer; Screenplay: Jeffrey Boam; Cast: Billy Zane, Treat Williams, Kristy Swanson & Catherine Zeta Jones. Robert Evans Company/Paramount Pictures. Shooting in Los Angeles, Thailand & Australia started October 2, 1995.

PHANTOM 2040 — Animated tales of the futuristic descendant of Lee Falk's creation. Executive Producers: David J. Corbett, William E. Miller & Jeffrey Schon; Supervising Producer: Mary Corbett; Associate Producer: Mary Katherine Moore; Director: Stu Rosen; Story Editors: Judith Reeves-Stevens & Garfield Reeves-Stevens. Hearst Animation Productions in association with Hearst Entertainment & IDDH.

THE REAL ADVENTURES OF JONNY QUEST — Animated series featuring Doug Wheeler's character originally created as a Hanna-Barbera cartoon which led to a series of comics from Comico. Executive Producer: Buzz Potamkin; Producer/Director: Takashi; Producer/Story Editor: Peter Lawrence. Hanna-Barbera Cartoons Inc.

SPIDER-MAN — Animation. Executive Producers: Avi Arad & Stan Lee; Supervising Producer: Bob Richardson; Producer & Story Editor: John Semper; Co-ordinating Producer: John Cawley; Casting: Tony Pastor. Marvel Films Animation.

TALES FROM THE CRYPT: BORDELLO OF BLOOD — Inspired by the EC comic of the same name. Cast: Dennis Miller, Erika Eleniak, Angie Everhart, Chris Sarandon, Corey Feldman & Aubrey Morris; Executive Producers: Richard Donner, David Giler, Walter Hill, Joel Silver & Robert Zemeckis; Producers: Gilbert Adler & A.L. Katz; Director: Gilbert Adler; Screenplay: Bob Gale, Robert Zemeckis, A.L. Katz & Gilbert Adler. New City Prodns Inc. Shooting in Vancouver, British Columbia started May 12 1995.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES — An animated series based on the characters created by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird. Executive Producer: Fred Wolf; Producer: Kara Vallow; Director: Bill Wolf; Executive Story Editor: David Wise. Fred Wolf Films.

THE TICK — New England Comics' superhero, the creation of Ben Edlund, in his own animated series. Producer: Hank Tucker; Story Editor: Ben Edlund; Production Executive: Stephanie Graziano; Casting: Susan Blu. Sunbow Productions Inc in association with Graz Entertainment Inc.

ULTRAFORCE — Animated series featuring characters from the Malibu Ultraverse title. Producer: Chuck Patton; DIC Entertainment LP.

X-MEN — Animated Marvel mutant mayhem! Executive Producers: Stan Lee, Avi Arad & Joseph Calamari; Supervising Producer: Will Meugniot; Producer: Frank Squillace; Executive in Charge of Production: Dana Booton. Saban Entertainment in association with Graz Entertainment Inc.

IN PRE-PRODUCTION

THE CROW: CITY OF ANGELS — Sequel to James O'Barr's original story (and the Brandon Lee film). Producers: Edward R. Pressman & Jeff Most; Director: Tim Pope; Screenplay: David Goyer; Cast: Vincent Perez, Mia Kirshner, Iggy Pop and Ian Dury. Edward R. Pressman Film Corp in association with Jeff Most Productions. Currently shooting in LA.

ZEN: INTERGALACTIC NINJA — Based on the Entity Comics character. Executive Producer: Mark Freeman; Producer: Phillippe Diaz; Director: Brian Yuzna; Screenplay: Chris Solimine. Sceneries Entertainment Corp. Shooting in LA and Arizona started June 1995.

IN PREPARATION

MARS ATTACKS — Based on the trading cards and Topps comic. Producers: Tim Burton & Laurie Parker; Director: Tim Burton; Screenplay: Jonathan Gems. Tim Burton Productions/Warner Bros. Shooting in LA and Washington started in December 1995.

MEN IN BLACK — Based on the series created by Lowell Cunningham and published by Aircel Comics. Producers: Walter Parkes & Laurie MacDonald; Executive Producer: Steven Spielberg; Director: Barry Sonnenfeld; Screenplay: Ed Solomon; Cast: Tommy Lee Jones & Will Smith. Amblin Entertainment.

IN DEVELOPMENT

CATWOMAN — Based on the DC Comics character featured in Batman Returns. Director: Tim Burton; Screenplay: Dan Waters. Michelle Pfeiffer is expected to star. Warner Brothers.

CRYING FREEMAN — Based on the character created by Kazuo Koike & Ryoichi Ikegami. Producers: Samuel Hadida & Brian Yuzna; Director: Christopher Gan; Cast: Mark Dacascos & Julie Condra Douglas. August Entertainment.

FANTASTIC FOUR — The reason Roger Corman's Concorde Films version of the Fantastic Four was shelved; based on the Marvel Comics characters. Director: Chris Colombus. 20th Century-Fox.

FLASH GORDON — Yet another movie based on the classic newspaper strip character who made his debut in 1934. Producers: Ben Myron & David Halpern; Screenplay: David S. Goyer.

JONNY QUEST — Doug Wheeler's character (created as a Hanna-Barbera cartoon which led to a series of comics from Comico) in a live-action film. Co-producer: Lauren Shuler-Donner; Screenplay: Fred Dekker. Turner Pictures.

LUKE CAGE — Marvel's super-powered hero for hire. Executive Producer: Bradford Smith; Producer: Ed Pressman; Director: John Singleton; Screenplay: Joe Doughrity.

PLASTIC MAN — Jack Cole's stretchable sleuth making his movie debut. Director: Bryan Spicer; Screenplay: Larry Wilson. Amblin Entertainment.

SPIDER-MAN — Maybe this time a Marvel character will be successfully transferred to the film! Producer/ Director/Screenplay: James Cameron. Lightstorm Entertainment-Carolco Pictures.

SUPERMAN REBORN — Even before his unfortunate accident, Christopher Reeve had dismissed talk of his playing the Son of Krypton for a fifth time but, for all that, this is effectively Superman V. Producer: Jon Peters; Screenplay: Jonathan Lemkin. Warner Bros.

V FOR VENDETTA — Based on the Alan Moore/ David Lloyd/Dez Skinn future anarchist creation first seen in the 1980s UK Warrior magazine. Producer: Joel Silver; Director: Brett Leonard: Screenplay: Hilary Henkin.

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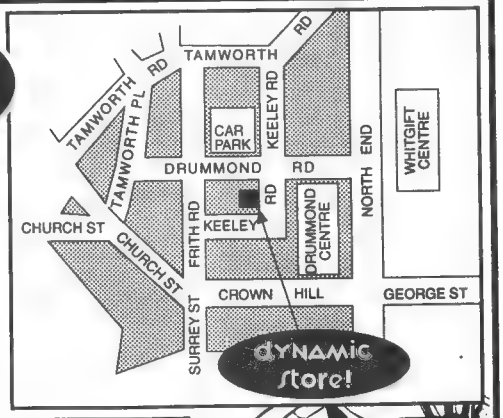

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nETworks

WELCOME to the revamped NETworks column. In the coming issues we aim to fully explore the deluge of comics related material on the Internet, World Wide Web, and other online services.

We will be reviewing what is out there, directing you to good comics sites, relaying the latest news and gossip heard online, and if you know nothing about Internet, Web etc. we aim to inform and help you to get connected!

Heard on the Net

The Internet and other online services have been buzzing with news and comment this past month. There have been hundreds of messages flying around, especially on the comics forums and Internet newsgroups, where the news was tracked, rumours abounded and finally it was officially confirmed. There has been a *lot* of discussion about the Marvel/Image deal, the Marvel staff cutbacks and more. People were stunned, angry, philosophical — you name it!

Fans and professionals alike reacted and were not slow to put forward their views. The great thing about these sort of forums is that all sorts of people pitch in and speak their minds.

Marvel staff cuts

Still reeling from the Marvel-Image news, the net and online services were suddenly once again alive with reports of Marvel staff cutbacks.

On the Internet newsgroup rec. arts.comics. marvel.universe, Tom Vincent wrote: *To the best of my knowledge, and culled from friends in and out of the office, these are the editors left after the massacre.*

If I have left out any names, please forgive me. I wish with all my heart that I was writing down the name of EVERY editor I've worked with over my years of association with Marvel that did not leave of their own accord.

The Survivors (+1 means assistant to that editor remains, as they had before the purge, but I don't know for sure): Bob Harras +1; Mark Gruenwald +1; Bobbie Chase +1; Ralph Macchio +1; Tom Breevort +1; Kelly Corvese +1; Suzanne Gaffney; Jaye Gardener; James Felder and Mark Powers.

Furthermore, it is my understanding that all licensed books (Barbie, Power Rangers, etc.) are going over to Malibu.

The only reason I can think of is this: Although an inker friend of mine does work for both companies at the same page rate, when Malibu contacted me to do work for them last year, they were offering me half of my Marvel page-rate for the same work. I politely but promptly turned it down.

The only thing I can conclude from that encounter, given the fact that they're the same company, is that Perelman's pinheads were fishing about to see how many freelancers would willingly take a pay cut...

Ask the lowest-paid guy in the chain if he wants a pay cut. This probably goes a long way in explaining how Marvel's suits have arrived at some of their brilliant strategies.

Cavalieri cavalcade

Messages were posted regarding one of the major casualties of the Marvel staff layoffs — Joey Cavalieri. David T. Watkins wrote: *Since 2099 is still a sales bomb and they've laid off the head editor, does it look like Marvel is finally going to admit that it's not working and dump that line harder than the New Universe?*

A number of people responded in defence of 2099 and Cavalieri. Mark Waid wrote: *Let's get some facts straight (and exonerate my pal Joey Cavalieri). Just because you don't like it, doesn't mean that 2099 is a "sales bomb". Hasn't been doing well for a while, but those books still outsell half the DC line, if not more. (Spidey sells Superman numbers and the rest outsell Wonder Woman and Flash, two relatively healthy books.)*

Moreover, while they ain't all gems, there's more craft there than you can find in most Marvel books. (Warren, you want to back me up here?) Sure, that line's past its prime, but like it or not, Joey created something completely new at Marvel — a long-lived franchise that made a ton of money for Marvel (you seen the X-2099 toys?) and had some really nice moments (X-Nation ordered in strongly and looks sweet). Hell, FF 2099 is a good book and, IMO, would have had the same fan-appeal potential as Untold Tales of Spider-Man if some CHIMP hadn't priced the first issue at four bucks and thus made sure no one would try it. Joey's thanks, of course, is to get fired.

Karl Kesel's message told how some professionals were unhappy about the departure of Cavalieri: *To follow up on Joey Cavalieri being fired... a number of pros (myself included) resigned from their 2099 books in protest. I firmly believe that 2099 was vastly better than it had any right to be, and it was all because of Joey's ideas, suggestions and editorial choices. And I know because he continually pushed me and the FF 2099 book in new, exciting directions ... directions that I certainly won't write now, and (rumour has it) probably wouldn't see print even if I did. I get strong indications that the 2099 line only has a few months left.*

Dr Fate: cancelled or not?

There has been debate as to whether **Doctor Fate** was to be cancelled. On Compuserve, Edward Douglas wrote this message to **Dr Fate** writer Len Kaminski: *Well, I don't want to start any rumors, so let me state very clearly that Fate isn't cancelled!! (Got that, everyone?)*

BUT... I'm really a bit disappointed because I just learned from Dan Thorsland that you're no longer writing it and Anthony Williams is no longer drawing it! What gives, Len? I just was pondering on how amazing the last few issues have been, how well you and Anthony work together, and how much you've really developed what might have been considered a bit of a cliched character (adventure seeker, vigilante-type... even though it's with a mystical bent.)

I'd even be bold enough to say that you've thrown a bit of yourself (or how you'd like to be seen) into the character of Fate (although Dan says you're more like Arnold Burnsteel

Comics and the Net: Comics are very well represented on the Internet and online services. There is a wealth of material in terms of information provided by fans on particular comics and characters, information from publishers, online comic strips, art, news, trivia ... you name it!

Much of users' time on the Net is taken up with trying to discover what actually is there, what is of interest, what is worth looking at, where to find it and so on. So one of the main problems with all this data is — well, let's call it information overload!

Just trying to keep up with what is going on — the latest news and gossip — is pretty difficult; but hopefully you'll find a few pointers in this column.

There are two main aspects to the comics on the Net/online world: Firstly, there is the Internet, where you'll find comics on the World Wide Web. These consist of graphically illustrated, well presented pages of text. There are also discussion forums, called newsgroups, where anyone can dive in and start up a discussion or join an existing debate.

When you access them, you see lots of messages grouped together into subject threads. One way to think of it is as a group conversation in a pub (no drinks, of course, not even virtual bevviesl) . It can be chat, gossip, serious debate, and so on.

Secondly, there are commercial online services with similar discussion groups called Forums. The most popular in the UK and the one with the most comics content is provided by Compuserve.

On Compuserve there are two excellent forums — *Comics & Animation Forum* and *Comics Publishers' Forum*. These are frequented by fans and professionals alike. You'll find that Dave Gibbons, Walt Simonson, Dan Jurgens, Marvel Comics, Image, Wizard, Don Rosa, Mark Waid and many more are regulars there.

The Comics/Animation forum likely to be of most interest to the majority of readers. It has a number of topic sections, such as Comic Books, Animation, Retailers, Industry News. In addition to hundreds of messages and topics each day, there are regular real-time online conferences, libraries with files you can download (for example, comics reviews, comics images, etc).

In future issues we will be focusing in more detail on what the Internet and online services are, how much they cost and how to get on to them. *Rob Fleming*

Net Reviews

Reviewers: Richard Johnson (RJJ), Robert Fleming (RF).

Each month we will offer tasters of good places to visit by reviewing some of the more interesting and esoteric comics sites.

Advance Comics
http://www.cam.org/~stoy/newcomics.html
Who needs to spend money on bulky coffee-table catalogues when these pages do it for you? Well, they are a little behind schedule, and don't list the Capital-exclusive titles, despite the name of the page. Nevertheless, as an instant access-point to several months of solicited comics, they could be a valuable tool. (RJJ)

Adhesive Comics *http://www.eden.com/comics/adhesive.html*
Entering the weird world of Too Much Coffee Man, Eyebeam, The Eden Matrix and Jab, these pages are surprisingly bland. Cover repros are pretty, but slow to read *[speed of display may depend on your machine]*. Simplified descriptions of comics make this a one-stop visit and add little to the comics. (RJJ)

Steve Gerber's Web Page
Interesting web pages from comics professional Steve Gerber. He comments: *If all the bad news about the industry has you down in the dumps, drop over to my web page. I've posted another 25-year-old excursion into brain damage for those who need a lift. The story is called Conversion in a Terminal Subway, and it makes about as much sense as anything that's happened in the comic-book business this week.* (RF)

NCRL: New Comic Book Releases List
http://www.mnsinc.com/hyworth/comics/new.html
This is updated every week (usually on Tuesday) and lists new comics releases. It has nice-looking pages. Worth a surf. (RF)

Ancient Brain Parts: The Matt Wagner Fan Page
http://www.sojourn.com/~dh5251/web/index.html
Proof that fans can outdo the big boys on the Internet. Slick, fast, and full of articles, with examples of Wagner's work and a wonderful, twisted sense of humour. Easy to use, attractive and absorbing. (RJJ)

John Byrne's Next Men *http://mole.uvm.edu/~cblaise/NextMen.html*
Heavy on the colour graphics and the modem, the page summarises the book, and reproduces valuable sections. Unfortunately the present absence of the comic from the shelves makes this an unlikely page except for die-hard fans. (RJJ)

Page 45
http://www.ccc.nottingham.ac.uk/~enzds/comics/Page45.html
A nice background effect makes the reprints of comic-shop Page 45's newsletter easy on the eye. These act as good promotion for the shop and give easy access to a reader who may have read about it in the pages of **Cerebus**. (RJJ)

Spawn *http://www.mcfarlane.com/*
This lush series of pages reflects the dark but colourful book, and offer hundreds of pages for dedicated **Spawn** fans. You can write to Todd McFarlane, chat with other **Spawn** fans and find out the latest news. The design and ease of reference make for a good use of World Wide Web software. (RJJ)

Comics Net Directory List

Below is a listing of some of the comics World wide Web pages on the Internet. The first piece of text eg: *http://www.naticom.net/www/Broadway/* is what you type in your World Wide Browser URL area. This effectively is the unique location ID or address of the web pages.

http://www.nauticom.net/www/Broadway/
Broadway Comics
http://dragon.acadiau.ca:1667/~860099w/comics/comics.html
Comic Book and Comic-Strip Page
http://haven.uniserve.com/~puck/cbldf/
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
http://www.actwin.com/csn/
Comic Shop News Home Page
http://www.halcyon.com/fgraphic/home.html
The Comics Journal Home Page
http://www.phlab.missouri.edu/HOMES/c617145_www/comix.html
Comics 'n stuff!
http://www.cris.com/~Scotth/cmxdex.html
Comics-related documents
http://www.digimark.net/wraith/bibliography.html
Comixographies
http://www.sonic.net/cia/index.html
Creative Interests Agency
http://www.teleport.com/~dhc/
Dark Horse Comics Home Page
http://www.unitedmedia.com/comics/dilbert/
The Dilbert Zone
http://sunsite.unc.edu/Dave/drfun.html
The Doctor Fun Page
http://haven.uniserve.com/~puck/sandman/
The Dreaming: Neil Gaiman Page
http://www-it.hiof.no/%7Ejonal/gcd/
Grand Comic Database Public site
http://www.ac.biola.edu/~pauls/groo/groo.html
Groo the Wanderer
http://www.cen.uiuc.edu/~jb2561/comic.html
Inking (comic books)
http://users.aol.com/jmoore6290/private/moorink.htm Johann's Comics Page
http://www.neosoft.com/~kmac/kmacs.htm
K-Mac's Place
http://www.cs.cmu.edu:8001/afs/cs/user/vernon/www/lsh.html
The Legion of Super-Heroes
http://www.peak.org/~djwilli/lsh.html
The Legion of Super-Heroes
http://sunsite.unc.edu/netcomics/
Netcomics: The Internet Comics Resource Center
http://www.mordor.com/thehop/lemon_custard/
Lemon Custard
http://www.nuke.com/cgi-bin/addin/heropguide/comics/comics.htm
NUKE Hero: Price Guide: Comics
http://www.nuke.com/cgi-bin/addin/hero/hero.htm
NUKE Hero: Home Page
http://www.nuke.com/
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http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/SGerber
Steve Gerber's own web pages.
http://www.digimark.net/wraith/SDCC
San Diego Comic Con
http://www.css.itd.umich.edu/users/kens/comics.html
Some stuff about COMICS
http://www.insv.com/spawn/
Spawn Headquarters
http://www.contrib.andrew.cmu.edu/usr/ha09/superpets
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http://www.yahoo.com/Entertainment/Comics/Comic_Books/
YahooEntertainment: Comics: Comic Books

Neulogisms:

New terms with which you may be unfamiliar when starting out on the Internet:

AOL — America On-line is a specific server which provides users in the United States to access their own groups.

DC Comics has an AOL point, but be warned, because of prewritten software available on magazines such as **Wizard**, it is impossible to access AOL in the UK, and if access is acquired via the US, it proves to be extremely expensive.

Occasionally information and posts sent to AOL are reposted on the main Internet.

Net — Abbreviation for Internet. Lots of computers across the world joined together by satellite, phone lines and cables. Anyone can join.

E-mail — short for electronic mail, mail sent from one address (something@somewhere. else) to another across the Internet.

Compuserve, Genie, Prodigy, Win-UK.Net — are examples of companies that provide a limited subscription access to parts of the Internet.

Compuserve provides a CB (citizen's band) facility. This has access to either PG rated forums or adult forums — but it must be noted they cost a lot of money, despite Compuserve's online facilities being substantially reduced in price.

WWW page — The World Wide Web. Pages of interactive text and graphics letting you watch videos, play games, listen to music or get a specific piece of information at any time. A Website is the address which you key in for access.

User — Someone who uses a computer and is linked to the net with it.

Post — Message sent to newsgroup.

Newsgroup — Posts are collected under different subject headers. New groups are always being created, there's one for you out there!

Netiquette — The unwritten constitution of the Internet. An anarchic community, everyone on the net polices each other.

Guidelines are drawn up monitoring acceptable behaviour and putting a stop to unruly newcomers. Grasping netiquette can frustrate new users, but every guideline exists for a very good reason and the newuser groups on Usenet explain it all.

Remember, just because you pay for net access, doesn't necessarily mean that you have the right to do whatever you want with it, but with people joining groups every day, there is a call for rules to be changed.

<g> <G> — Not often seen in print this is a "grin" or a "big smile". Not to be confused with a smiley which is a more formal acknowledgement for net users.

:-) 8-) ;-) — Also not often seen in print, these are smileys, showing that what you've just said was meant as a joke! Essential for users without a sense of humour. Just turn your head sideways and all will be revealed. There are various smileys.

Column compiled by: Rich Johnston, Rob Fleming, Phil Hall and Dez Skinn

*<G>)! Sales on **Fate** are pretty low and I'm really surprised that it hasn't been put on the chopping block yet, probably because DC realises what great stuff you guys are capable of! What happened?*

The reply from Len Kaminski revealed that the **Dr Fate** book would live on, but he was off the creative team. He explained the reason behind this: *Okay...>sigh<... I've been keeping mum about this, mostly because I've been trying to avoid thinking about it, since leaving **Fate** behind is really gonna break my heart.*

*Here's the deal: sales on **Fate** started out modest at best, and thanks to the present market, it's lost a lot of ground since then. On the other hand, the powers that be at DC do **not** want to see the book cancelled, they just love it to death. Apparently Steven Grant and I managed to turn the conventional wisdom up there from lukewarm to effusive during the issues we co-wrote, and I haven't yet managed to scuttle their enthusiasm since taking over solo. But... sales suck, and they're looking down the barrel of having to cancel the book whether they like it or not, unless something's done to turn 'em around. So they decide to relaunch with a new number 1, and throw some promotion behind it.*

*Here's where things get Catch-22 on us. The marketing department won't GIVE them a big push for the book if the same guys doing it now are on it — they'll only back the relaunch with promo if they've got a **hot new creative team** to hype. So DC's in the position of having to take the team whose work made them love the book in the first place OFF the book, in order to SAVE the book.*

*So, this is nobody's favourite decision. I'm going to miss **Fate** something fierce, but I can't really complain about the way DC's treated me over it — especially considering some of the ghastly sh!t that's been slung my way over at the Slaughterhouse of Ideas. DC's been good enough to give me time to finish up the storylines I've set in motion, as well as offer me a new project or two to take **Fate**'s place on my schedule.*

Jurgens: off Spider-Man, on Titans?

Dan Jurgens (and many more!) responded to criticism from one person who felt he had more often than not left projects after a fairly short time. He also confirmed that he is leaving the Spider-Man book.

*Yep, I freely admit that in 1995 I had a couple of projects go awry. I took on **Solar** and was there for nine issues, the first five as writer and artist. Those issues came out twice a month and that is an incredible pace to keep up with. At that time Acclaim requested I leave **Solar** to launch a new series.*

The first issue of that series is done. I doubt it will ever see print due to the sweeping changes in the marketplace. Those decisions rest with the company, not me.

*The **Spider-Man** scenario played out differently but I can safely say that I intended to stay around a lot longer than I did. The situation didn't work out. I don't think I need to say more than that ... only mention that all anyone has to do is look at the pit of confusion Marvel has become.*

*So, I'll do Titans, a project we've been discussing for over a year now. I'd like to think I'll last on it a good long time. Maybe a track record that includes nine years on **Superman** is a better indicator than recent history.*

News that Jurgens was to do the **Titans** was well received by the online comic community. Carl Pietrantonio wrote: *Dan J. is one of the few people I think *could* revive the Titans after what has been done to them.*

Amalgam antics

With the DC/Marvel crossover series Amalgam, Bob Heer posted on Genie some "rejected" crossover projects:

10. *Quickflasher*
9. *Blue Devil Dinosaur*
8. *Super-Spider's Girlfriend, Mary Jane Lane*
7. *Super-Hulk's Pal, Jimmy Jones*
6. *J. Jonah Hex, Frontier Publisher*
5. *Swan-Thing, Muck Encrusted Silver Age Artist*
4. *Captain Marvel*
3. *Avenging Justice Legion of Defenders*
2. *Spider-Eater-Lad*
1. *Challengers of the Fantastic*

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Key to abbreviations used:

1 & 2 + 3	=	*Writer & penciller + inker*
b&w	=	*black & white content*
hbk	=	*hardback (book) edition*
tpbk	=	*trade paperback, squarebound, comic size*
Xpg	=	*number of interior pages*

All comics are 32 page colour titles unless stated otherwise

SHIPPING: MAR - APR '96

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☐ **Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger 11** (Max Allen Collins & Steve Erwin) Danger finds a web of secrets and truths about the perfect society he lives in. $2.25

☐ **Xander in Lost Universe 8** (Ron Fortier & Ron Randall + Terry Beatty) Lady Sensua stars in a solo adventure. $2.25

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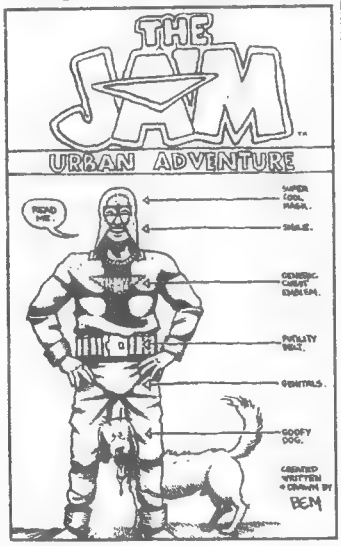

☐ **Negative Burn 33** (various) Anthology, including Chris Moeller's *Iron Empires*; Brian Bolland's *Mr Mamoulian*; *The Creep* by Phillip Hester; *Acid Lad* by Michael Avon Oeming. Mature readers. 64pg $3.95

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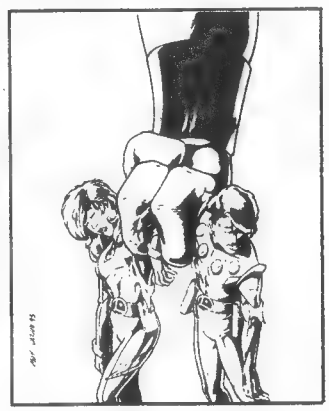

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EVENT COMICS

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☐ **Eddie Campbell's Bacchus 11** (Eddie Campbell) Queen Collage has news for King Bacchus which explains why she is vomiting every morning. Mature readers. $2.95

FANTAGRAPHICS

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IMAGE COMICS

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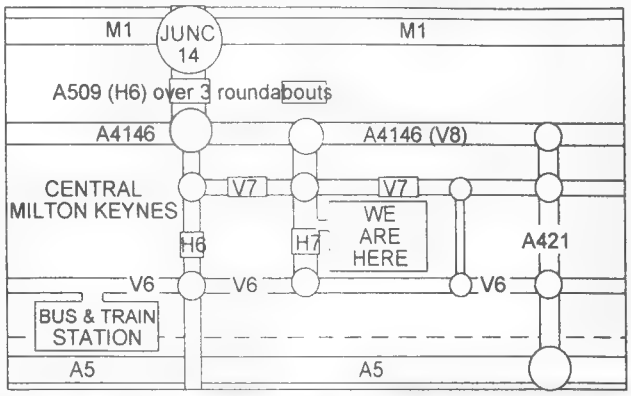

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☐ **Deathblow 25** (Brandon Choi & Trevor Scott) A guest appearance by Team 7 in the conclusion of *Brothers in Arms*. $2.50

☐ **Deathblow 26** (Brandon Choi & Trevor Scott) Acting as a prelude to the crossover *Fire From Heaven*. $2.50

☐ **Defcon 4 #2** (Mat Broome + Jeff Marriote & Mat Broome + Edwin Rosell) Set in a futuristic Japan with four people who have identical dreams. $2.50

☐ **Gen 13: Ordinary Heroes 2** (of 2; Adam Hughes + Mark Farmer) The young team races to stop a strange creature from destroying the entire city. Concluding part. $2.50

NEW ☐ **The Dragon 1** (Erik Larsen) Reprinting the original mini-series at a new low price. $0.99

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☐ **Man Against Time 2** (of 6; Motown Machineworks; Brett Lewis & Gino DiCicco) A story set simultaneously in the past, present and future. $2.25

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MARVEL

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X-Men family

☐ **The Adventures of the X-Men 2** (Ralph Macchio & Ben Herrera) Animated version of the *X-Men* cartoon. The savage Hulk and X-Factor guest star. . $0.99

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☐ **Generation X 15** (Scott Lobdell & ? + Mark Buckingham) Synch goes bananas and starts attacking his own team. . . $1.95

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☐ **Uncanny X-Men 332** (Scott Lobdell & Joe Madureira + Tim Townsend) The X-Men have to deal with a new Wolverine and

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As such, the opinions stated do not necessarily reflect those of the publication, but space will be given in subsequent issues to opposing views. Editing of accepted manuscripts will be done only as a matter of grammar, clarity and space consideration.

1995: A very good year?

Comment by Ronan Kane, Dundalk, Eire

IN THE latest *Comment* section (#63) you indicate it's bye bye to all the in-fighting and hello to commentary on comics (thank goodness). Well, with that in mind, here's one fan's view on the year just ended...

When Acclaim bought Valiant Comics I hoped for a return to Shooter-style days, but alas it all fizzled out. **Solar** was their best attempt, followed by Ron Marz's **X-O Manowar**, but it just didn't seem to happen for them. I know John Ostrander is probably doing brilliant work on **Eternal Warrior**, but I don't want to pay full price for it now, knowing it will turn up in bargain bins.

Dark Horse: **Ghost** was a particularly brilliant title, especially with Adam Hughes on art, but that's about it for me. I bought **Dark Horse Presents** 100-A for the Dave Stevens work and the much-vaunted revamp. But I thought it was boring and I found myself skipping word balloons. Oh well, back to the drawing board. I also sampled **Doc Savage vs The Shadow**. But I re-read Gerard Jones' **The Shadow Strikes** as a foretaste and found this earlier DC version was much better.

DC Comics: Superman and his family meandered around the place, going nowhere. **Aquaman** was a joy to read, throughout the whole year. **Sovereign Seven** made me see deficiencies in author Claremont's earlier **X-Men** work; as the new book's characters all sounded like Storm and colleagues. So I stopped reading it to protect my earlier memories. **Starman** was, as everyone says, DC's best title of the year, a class act. **Darkseid versus Galactus** and **Green Lantern versus Silver Surfer** were both brilliant, roll on more of the same.

Image Comics: I used to hate them. Then they hired Alan Moore, James Robinson, Kurt Busiek... (*"Hmmm, donuts,"* as Homer Simpson would say). They put out some great stuff. I'm really looking forward to **Spawn vs WildC.A.T.s** and **WildCATs vs X-Men**.

Malibu: It got sucked in by the mighty Marvel machine and the readers lost good titles. Of their pre-Marvel titles, I advise everybody to look out for the entire run of James Robinson's **Firearm**, you won't be sorry.

Marvel: I loved the clone idea in the Spider-Man family, it made sense to me that the Peter Parker we knew could be a clone. He didn't have the magic of the pre-#149 era. But neither does the "new" guy, so we are back to square one. Plus my nearly entire Spider-Man collection is now sort of null and void, because it wasn't really Spider-Man in the first place. **X-Men — The Age of Apocalypse** was brilliant; from *Legion Quest* to **X-Men Omega**, but since then they have just wandered. **Generation X** is the title that's dropped in quality the most through 1995. **The Hulk**, too, meandered all over the place, doing little figures of eight and generally digressing... but I'll still tag behind Peter David wherever he may want to go. Warren Ellis was great, particularly **Ruins**, but, you have to be worried when everything he works on gets cancelled. Is he the Peter Gillis of the '90s?

Topps: Their **X-Files** is a superior product, giving fans the fix when the show's not on.

That was my 1995. As long as you were careful, there were brilliant reads out there. For 1996, I'm going to try to get all the early Broadway Comics; Dark Horse's **Tarzan versus Predator**, because it sounds like a perfect match; **Warchild** from Maximum Press and Alan Moore — another perfect match. And, of course, **Kingdom Come**.

'Nuff said.

A natural progression?

Comment by Andy Brewer, Salford, Manchester

THE mainstream comic industry can only survive if it manages to attract new readers at a rate that at least matches those readers that leave every day. The big publishing companies surely know that, on average, they have a customer for probably no more than two years before he gives up on comics and moves on to

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other things because superhero comics get boring pretty quickly.

So why is it that they fail to impress most readers for any length of time? If they are wonderful, exciting, well-written, gorgeously illustrated and in full colour, there would be as many people reading them over the age of twenty (or fifty for that matter) as under it. But there aren't, are there? Superhero comics are, on the whole, read by teenagers.

The amount of older readers is tiny in comparison. I'd also imagine a few more female readers would like to get into this hobby if the quality of mainstream comics was higher. After all, it can no longer be said that female characters are liable to faint at the first sight of blood, but superhero comics still remain predominantly a male hobby.

Of course, they can excite for a while. But they have little lasting effect on most readers. You've only to read a few to realise that every issue, not only of the same title, but of *every* title, is merely a not so thinly disguised variation on a single theme — villain does something bad, hero fights him, hero wins, and all in a matter of a ten-minute read. So it is inevitable that for most, boredom will set in sooner rather than later.

How much healthier and more profitable the comics industry would be if it could retain even a small percentage of the tens of thousands who drop buying comics every year.

In Japan, where comics are read by almost everyone, they cover a subject range equal to that of books. In America and the UK, where the superhero rules, they're looked on with disdain by the general public, leaving we comic fans with a social standing equal to or even less than that of trainspotters and "Trekkies".

There must be millions of people of all ages and both sexes who read books, and most of those books are in black and white and are more expensive than superhero comics — two rather pathetic reasons often given by comic fans for sticking to "what they know" and not experimenting with independent titles. Go into any bookshop and you have a bewildering array of genres and subject matters to choose from. Go into most comic shops and you'll see superhero comics almost to the complete exclusion of anything else, or at least any other type of comic as it seems more and more space is used for books, videos, models, T-shirts, etc, etc.

If just about every book you could buy in a bookshop was detective fiction then how many book readers would there be after a few years? Probably as many as there are comic readers now.

If people never read anything but what they know (as a previous comment suggested they should), or what initially attracted them to comics, then comics are almost certain to lose another reader after only a short time.

Independents and the small press provide another road for someone to walk down. I'm not saying it's the only road, I'm not saying it's a better road, but it is a different one which, if you want to continue reading comics for as long as I have, you will almost certainly have to go down. If you try indie comics and don't like them, then fine. If you want to read superheroes for the rest of your life, that's fine as well. I really don't care what you do with your money and your time.

But I'm old enough and have known enough die-hard super-hero fans to realise there are few who, even if they continue enjoying superheroes, don't eventually prefer indies. I think on the whole, at a risk of sounding too smug, it's just something that happens as you get older.

The truth is out there

Comment by Steve Tanner, BFPO 140

MARVEL never ceases to amaze. I guess that's why they're still known as "The House of Ideas", although all the ideas they appear to have these days seem monumentally stupid ones.

Marvel's decision to re-vamp their older titles is nothing new or shameful — DC did exactly the same thing following their **Crisis on Infinite Earths** maxi-series — but the methods Marvel appear to be adopting seem to confirm that they are on a slippery slope and picking up speed towards the chasm of sheer desperation.

The notion of Marvel handing some of its oldest and most respected properties to the Image "enfant terribles" is bizarre and proves that in the comics industry, as politics, nothing is set in stone.

The most intriguing aspect of Marvel putting its titles out to tender must be the cancellation of **Incredible Hulk**, one of their few critically-acclaimed regular books. There seems to be no rhyme or reason to this move. I can't really accept that Hulk's

Avenger status could prevent him having a solo book as it doesn't seem to make any difference to Captain America or Iron Man.

It's so strange a business tactic that it's rife for a conspiracy theory, which although equally absurd, could make a bit of sense bearing in mind the petulance of some of the Image crowd.

Of all Image's critics the most vocal has been Peter David. Peter David writes **Hulk**. **Hulk** is being cancelled. Cancellation of **Hulk** seems to have been caused due to a revamping of **The Avengers** by Rob Liefeld. Rob Liefeld seems to be one of the Image founders least able to constructively deal with harsh criticism.

Liefeld uses his new relationship with Marvel to cancel **The Hulk**, thereby pulling David's most respected job from under him. Beware other Image critics working for Marvel.

Of course, I don't believe this myself, but — like all conspiracy theories — it's a flight of fancy that could have truth as its launch pad.

Stan Lee: hero or villain?

Comment by Del Rooney, Glasgow

ALAN Woollcombe's letter about Big M (*Comment*, **Comics International** #63) had me in tears — of laughter, that is. Sure, I'm highly critical of most comics, but it must also be kept in mind that they are only escapist entertainment and not the Holy Grail or Moses' Tablets.

Anyway, the mad machinations of Marvel in the last 20 years have all the elements of a bizarre farce, which will run and run until the fanboys finally desert en masse to the cheaper joys of the Internet. If **Hero Illustrated** can do it, then every comic book company can.

I remember reading my first Atlas comic, way back in the '50s, about a man wishing he could gain immortality. When his wish was granted, he was turned into a tree. Poor sap. Bet his bark was worse than his bite!

Then came the Kirby and Lee monster comics. Same story every issue, only the names of the monsters were changed to protect the guilty. Then the last throw of the dice with **Fantastic Four** which, natch, was a hit. Then followed Spidey, Hulk, etc. I bought 'em, enjoyed 'em, then threw 'em in the dustbin. They were only comics — right?

Mighty popular and cheap (2½p). Everyone loved 'em and as is the way of the world, all the adulation went to Stan's head. He saw himself as the great creator. Y'see, it seems to have slipped his mind that Jack Kirby was co-creator and master artist. The only thing Stan could draw was his curtains.

That's right, he was only a puffed up ideas man, and after Jack buggered off in the late '60s, what did Stan do? Only let the lunatics run the asylum, that's all; while he caroused all around the country doing his TV and personal appearances bit.

He was supposed to be promoting Marvel Comics. But he actually spent more time actively promoting himself as Mr Nice Guy. Wotta scam! He even took me in. Let's face it, Stan Lee's a born actor (Bring on the Oscar)! Didja know he can even cry on cue? Yep, real tears — no glycerine for this noodle.

The '70s and '80s saw Marvel being sold, with the faithful Marvel fans being offered second-hand, stale, regurgitated material. Stone me, they even changed Spidey's costume. No big deal! Now, if he had changed sex that would have been different!

The artists and writers around this period were B-grade, reusing the same old boring plots and characters that had amazed and stimulated first time round. But after the Nth reprise, even the most loyal and dedicated Marvel fan was apt to feel a trifle jaded!

Yes, fantastic Marvel had just become, in effect, yet another comic-book sausage factory churning 'em out for the masses. The "grab the dough and run" syndrome. Assholes! The fans deserved better than this. But, of course, they weren't getting it.

Around this period in England, Dez Skinn was in charge of the Marvel UK material and was innovating material, making the Marvels that the Brits bought fresh, original and exciting, with plenty of talented UK artists and writers, and not just superheroes.

But over at Marvel US, things were going down the pan. Drastic solutions were needed, so they called in the trouble-Shooter. Yes, the one and only Slim Jim. The wunderkind — the Irving Thalberg of comics. He would soon get things done.

And so it came to pass that Jim meddled, interfered, annoyed and totally disrupted the entire creative team at Marvel. Always sticking his beak in where it wasn't wanted; killing off Marvel characters left, right and centre on a mere whim. Yep, Jim Shooter was as popular at Marvel

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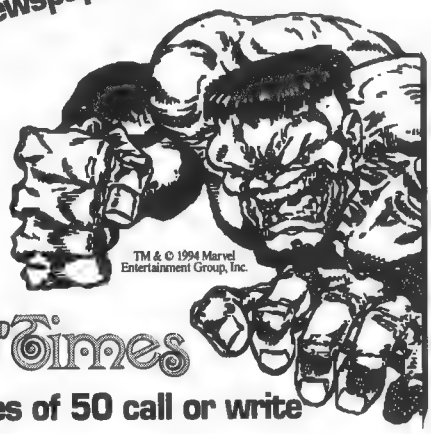

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as leprosy. At the time, Shooter wrote two comics that are classics of their kind for tedium, bad plotting, inane dialogue and unbelievable characterisations. You know what they are!

All Marvel's writers and artists did a Long John Silver and deserted, leaving the company with C-grade creators. Whoops! Instead of excerbating a recovery, Shooter had only made things worse. So he was promptly given the order of the boot. If it hadn't been for Spidey, Hulk and the Fantastic Four, Marvel at this point could easily have gone bankrupt. But they hung on in there like grim death. Stubborn gits, weren't they?

In the '90s, Marvel was bought by Ron Perelman, a man who had probably never read a comic book in his entire bloody life. This didn't fill me with confidence as, at the time, I was only buying **Hulk**, **Spider-Man**, **Fantastic Four** and (blush) **Ghost Rider**. But hey, hey, there *were* some improvements. Ho yus! Better quality paper, new formats, graphic novels. But the actual source material itself was still bland, formulated and dull. Eeek! All the fun, excitement and originality had entirely disappeared from Marvel's offerings. They now depended more on gimmicks than actual content, with the price of these little extras being paid for by the mug fans. Au naturel. After all, Marvel now had shareholders who wanted a big return on their investment and executive bosses who only lived for their share options. Meanwhile, the comic-buyers continued to be screwed rotten. 'Twas always thus!

Spider-Man, the top-seller in all of Marvel's 30-odd years, went through a helluva lot of changes, and the way I see Spidey at the moment is like this: Peter Parker (who isn't really Peter Parker) had parents who really weren't his, because his real parents were dead, you see. And the Peter who was Spider-Man for years really wasn't, 'cos Spider-Man wasn't Peter but a clone who thought he was Spider-Man but... Oooohhh, even thinking about it drives me crazy.

To me Peter Parker is Spider-Man. Anything else is pure bum fluff, and I'm having none of it. Exit stage right one ex-Spidey reader.

But there's always good ol' hype, one thing that Marvel has refined to the highest possible art. Hyperbole, with its promise of great things to come. Such as? Well... untold origins of favourite characters; entire new universes (Oh, no! Not again!); major turning points (ie: they die horribly); new twists, turns and shocks in all directions.

So these ideas were new when they were first done in the '40s. Hell, what the punters don't know won't hurt them... just their wallets. But, where does hype end and lying begin?

Stan is still around, sporting a nifty hairpiece, urging the fans to "Love me! Love me!" like a walking, breathing relic from a far distant age. Which is exactly what he is. Yet this is also the man who states in interviews that he doesn't read comics much any more. So why the hell does the logo say *Stan Lee Presents*. Hmmmn, maybe Stan the Man doesn't give a damn for the fans any more — maybe he never did!

Finally, Perelman. The man who looks on Marvel (and presumably Image) and Heroes World Distribution as playthings to be used, milked, discarded and sold when bigger, better, brighter toys come along.

Not just a possibility, it's a doggone certainty. That's why the little kiddies from Image are being let loose. Just one final mad fling to wring a few more bucks outta your pocket before Marvel gets sold yet again.

Ha, ha! The merry Marvel-Go-Round. It never stops, does it?

The best Superman film

Comment by Kevin Doe, Fallowfield, Manchester

IN 1979, the sequel to *Superman, Superman II,* was two-thirds of the way from completion when it was decided that director Richard Donner was using too much money and should be given his marching orders. Taking over the directorial reigns, Richard Lester went on to finish the film, but not before certain changes were made because he had an opposing view to his predecessor as to which direction the whole film should go in.

Superman II originally contained more humour, the three villains from the planet Krypton were to be introduced sooner as well as being portrayed as more menacing. However, Mr Lester decided to drop these scenes, many of which included Lex Luthor and sidekick Otis, as well as softening up the Krypto-villains, who subsequently came across like super-powered children.

Add to all this the dispute

between Warner Bros. and Marlon Brando, which resulted in all the scenes that included the actor being removed from the final version of *Superman II*. The final result was that only half of Mr Donner's original made it into the final cut.

The first *Superman* movie was, to me, just a set-up for the fireworks that were to come in the sequel, which turned out in the end to be a mere damp squib. What could have been an excellent film turned out instead as a hotch-potch of great special effects, but with a story that just wasn't strong enough to pull it all together.

There are a number of incidents that take place in *Superman II*, which have left me puzzled ever since: (i) When Lex Luthor makes his escape from prison, aided by Eve, they go to the Fortress of Solitude, but after this his assistant disappears for no apparent reason.
(ii) At the end of the film when Superman defeats the Krypto-villains, whatever happens to them? There were supposed to be some pre-publicity stills which revealed their fates, but were withdrawn...

Such sequences could be made sense of if *Superman II* was released in more of its original form by asking Richard Donner to edit a new version together including those scenes that were cut. The film could then be shown in cinemas and the profits could go to a paralysis project or some such fund.

Warner Bros. have made a lot of money from the Superman films, as is their job, and this would be as good a way as any to show respect for Christopher Reeve after his riding accident.

Apparently, there exist scenes containing Marlon Brando that explain Kryptonian science. Showing these would explain the film's final confrontation between Superman and the Krypto-villains, where powers such as energy beams emit from their finger tips and the ability to project images of themselves are introduced to the Superman mythos for the first (and only) time.

Instead of the Jor-El footage laying discarded on a film laboratory shelf somewhere, I feel certain that Brando would allow the use of the scenes, especially if its profits went to a worthy cause and not into Warner's pockets.

And so it ends...

Comment by Simon Bowland, Cheshire

I THINK the days of enjoying comics seem to be at an end. Not a particularly optimistic outlook I know, but when you find that some of the core titles in the Marvel line are being sold off to Image of all people.... well, it just makes me cringe.

For a long time now, **The Avengers**, **Iron Man**, **Captain America** and **The Fantastic Four** have been in desperate need of a direction, of a solid creative team, of... something. They have been pretty dire on the whole. So top marks to Marvel, then, for introducing Mark Waid, Ron Garney, Jim Cheung and Mike Deodato onto the books to give them a little more creative stability.

Trust them to then go and blow it! No sooner have we got used to entertaining and well-drawn tales of **Captain America** after too many years of dull, unoriginal pap, than Marvel — in its infinite wisdom, you understand — hatches a cunning new plan. Franchise the titles out to arch rivals, Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld! Now call me crazy (and many will) but I have to confess that their **Captain America** by the brilliant Mark Waid and his artistic cohort, Ron Garney, sounds far more appealing than **Captain America** by Rob Liefeld and his team. Rob is not a writer — and only just an artist in all honesty — and he never will be. Frankly none of his associates who "write" his comics are much whack either, certainly nowhere near to being on a par with Mark Waid.

The prospect of Jim Lee providing pencil artwork for both **Iron Man** and the **Fantastic Four** sounds promising, I have to admit, but Jim — and let's be honest here — does not have the reputation for being the world's speediest artist, and again he's no Chris Claremont or Alan Moore when it comes to writing. I'm afraid I have to adopt the doom and gloom attitude that no good will come from this deal, apart from maybe a few Image creators becoming financially more sound and Marvel boosting the sales of its flagship titles.

But then there's more! For some reason, the decision has been made to cancel both **Thor** and **The Incredible Hulk**. They're not being resurrected by Image, they're being killed stone dead! Now **Thor** has struggled of late with some very poor writers and artists, but the injection of Warren Ellis, William Messner-Loebs and

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Mike Deodato have proven immensely successful and from my point of view have certainly provided entertainment. Well written and well drawn comics, which is what we all want.

But most disgraceful is the departure of **The Incredible Hulk**. How long has Peter David stayed loyal to you on the title, Marvel? Eight years? More? It's one of the finest comics on the stands today, certainly Marvel's best, and they're axing it because Jim and Rob say so. Isn't this the Jim and Rob who left you in the lurch three years ago to form Image? Remember that, Marvel, or have you got a bad case of the infamous Red Mist?

I find myself seeing only one good thing to come out of all this. My comic bill is extortionate and that's six less titles for me to shell out for every month.

Or perhaps now Lee and Liefeld are on board, every six or seven weeks...

A missile from the trenches

While Comics International has a policy of not publishing anonymous letters, because of the delicacy of the following an exception is being made to allow the inclusion of a comics retailer's opinion on how recent events affect his business.

DO I FEEL like a traitor? I don't know, but Marvel in particular was responsible for getting me involved in comics way back when. Although we've had our ups and downs (like all lovers do), Marvel has always been a part of my life. But the jackals are snapping at its heels and I'm afraid I'm now joining the pack.

I've always thought that the comics industry, like any other, worked best as a co-operative: creators, publishers, distributors and retailers pulling together to the benefit of all. I didn't ever consider the possibility of a "them and us" scenario but... whose side is Marvel on anyway?

Like — I hope — every other comics retailer, I received two Christmas presents from Marvel.

The first was the already announced deals negotiated with Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld. These have already been discussed in last issue's *Comment* but I'd like to add a retailer's concerns: How the **** are we supposed to order the ****ing things! Will long-time, older readers use the changes to abandon ship (as they've already abandoned the Spider-Man titles because of their dislike of the Ben Reilly/clone storyline)? Will current Image readers go for the Jim Lee produced titles? Will anybody give a toss about whatever Rob Liefeld does? Who knows?

One thing's for certain, the only ones who are going to be hit in the pocket are retailers. Like trying to order Amalgam one-shots coupling different-selling Marvel and DC characters, we are damned whatever decision we make!

You think that was a great present? Number two's a doozie!

Picture this: It's the morning of Saturday, 23rd December, and I'm opening the last post before Christmas. One envelope bears the Marvel logo and I think "Ooh, a Christmas card!" but it's not. In fact, if ever there was an opposite to such, this was it!

It's a letter from Matthew Ragone, Vice President - Sales at Heroes World Distribution Inc and although it bears my shop name & address it's not even addressed to me. It is, after all, just a circular advising me that Heroes World (read Marvel) is moving the goal posts.

Until receipt of this letter, I (along with all other retailers) was able to get an extra 5% discount by meeting certain targets based on my April 1995 purchases. This letter was Marvel's way of letting me know that I could still receive the same discounts but the targets would now be based on my September purchases.

Call me a cynic, call me misguided but, whatever you do, don't call me stupid! I will take a lot of convincing that Marvel didn't choose that month purely because it represented their sales peak to date.

To add insult to injury:
(i) Matthew states that this change is "based upon the many comments we have received from you," which I take to mean from retailers, although I certainly didn't encourage or even request any such changes!
(ii) I don't know where on Earth they obtained the figure they're quoting (for my purchases)!
(iii) This moving of the goalposts was to commence with my order for February shipping titles but the deadline for ordering Feb books was the day *before* the letter (dated Dec 6th) reached me, so I couldn't make any adjustments, even if I wanted to! A nice bit of advance warning. Thanks, Matthew.

After due consideration, I decided that maybe I was being unfair as there's nothing to stop Marvel offering incentives based

upon less than 100% of my September base. They had, to give them their due, already followed that path with the original April base. I therefore decided to wait and see what they were going to offer re the March shipping titles.

Well, I waited... To get the additional discounts I'm used to, I've got to order 92% of the September level to obtain the extra 3% or 97% to receive the full 5%. In March?!

It's going to be tough to hit those targets but the order will include the six Marvel-Amalgam titles plus the double-sized **Wolverine** #100 and an extra week for five titles that are being double-shipped, so maybe it won't be that hard. At least, without stressing the change in base month, that's how Heroes World have pitched it to the retail community.

What have they missed? Well, how about the fact that sales on (almost) all Marvel titles are falling? Surely that is important! I've completed my Marvel order for March and I'm not in the ballpark for the revised bonus discount even if I go crazy on ordering the Amalgam books.

As it stands at present, the best I'm going to do is 55-60% of my September level!

Am I the only one left with the feeling that Marvel has turned its back on the very people who made it what it was?

I get the distinct impression that the only reason for this move was to improve the bottom line because the only people that Marvel now cares about are the brokers on Wall Street because they can influence the (currently free falling) share price and, as a direct result, the fates of the people in control at Marvel including the Vice President of Sales!

Do I still love Marvel? No, the love affair is over but I still have the memories. Would I stop stocking Marvel product? No, because I'm a business man and Marvel still accounts for a significant percentage of my turnover.

Do I wish that things were different? Oh yeah, but the men in suits are in control now and the only thing that matters is the bottom line.

No matter how hard I wish I was wrong, the dream is over but I've got this dreadful feeling the nightmares are only just beginning!

We're not all enemies...

Comment by Lou Bank, Dark Horse Comics, Milwaukie, USA

FOLLOWING are comments to Peter Ashton's letter from **Comics International 62**.

Re: "No major publisher would have the balls to take [David Lapham's **Stray Bullets**] on." Dark Horse Comics is a major publisher — #4, to be exact — and Dark Horse would most happily "take on" **Stray Bullets**. And, quite frankly, balls has nothing to do with it — good business sense, however, does.

Re: "Good business sense says publish what sells, even if it is to the detriment of the medium."

No. 'Good business sense' says to do what is best for your business — the key word being *your*. Dark Horse's business is that of a long-term entertainment company primarily concerned with the publishing of comic books.

It is with that in mind that we have focused on expanding the medium, publishing such forward-thinking and diverse projects as Frank Miller's **Sin City**, **John Byrne's Next Men**, Bryan Talbot's **The Tale of One Bad Rat**, **Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor**, Paul Chadwick's **Concrete** and our ever-changing anthology, **Dark Horse Presents**.

If we were a publicly-owned company run by lawyers and licensing agents, our business might be that of a company looking to increase its stock price. But it's not.

We're privately owned by Mike Richardson. And we're the fourth largest publisher of comic books in the US — what you might call a "major publisher".

Re: "I want to see [the comics medium] pass A levels, go to Oxford where it will graduate with a 1:1 in Great Comics and go on to rule the entertainment world. Nothing less. And I will fight for it at every stage."

Now your talkin' my language, Peter! But when going into battle, it's important to distinguish between your allies and your enemies. The "major publishers" are not your enemies — perhaps particular ones are, but not the group as a whole.

And self-publishers are not necessarily your allies. There's one self-publisher whose company is so overwrought with spandex you'd think that their "i" in the corner was just French for "M".

Your allies are those publishers and creators whose performance echoes your fondest wishes. And only you can draw that line yourself.

GRADING GUIDE

One of the most problematic areas of buying, selling or valuing comics is grading them. A value can vary by as much as 50% through inaccurate assessment of the condition or grade of the item. The days of a comic being "good condition for its age" disappeared with decimalisation.

With the ever-spiralling values for old comics, the art of grading has become a science. The more expensive titles often carrying a percentage "score", between 100 (mint) and 1 (poor). Defects such as graffiti, shop stamps, taped spine and loose staples *should* be mentioned outside of the grade, with the value reduced accordingly (usually one grade down). To help people assess the grading of their collections better, we present the following definitions:

MINT CONDITION [m] (100%):
An almost impossible acquisition. A comic is mint when it is printed. But it then is counted, stacked, boxed, shipped, counted again, despatched again, counted again and racked in a store. By the time you buy it, it will be near mint at best. Collectors and dealers hardly ever list mint comics. When they do, selling prices are almost always "multiple guide" (ie. Two, three or more times the price stated for a mint copy in the price guides).
M has no defects whatsoever. It retains its cover gloss (or lustre) and has sharp corners. No printing or binding defects. Staples centred, fresh and shiny. Literally as new.

NEAR MINT [nm++, nm+, nm, nm-, nm--] (97-90%)
The acknowledged top grade. A particularly handsome copy in near mint is often referred to as nm+, whereas one almost near mint is referred to as nm-. The more expensive the comic, the more precise the grading, with some dealers using the addtional emphasis of nm++ or nm--. We're talking only a 5% difference in price, but on a £1000 or more item, that's £50 a +!
NM has no instantly apparent defects. A very slight defect is permissible, such as a binding or printing mistake. No fading, spine roll or cover surface wear beyond the smallest corner crease or very slight stress around staples. Cover well centred, still flat and without wear. Spine tight and flat. Interior pages clean white and supple.

VERY FINE [vf or vfn, from ++ to --] (89-75%)
Still an excellent copy, as much as 25% cheaper than a near mint copy, but with minimal wear beginning to show. Still sharp, clean and bright.
VFN has several very minor defects. Cover: almost flat, minimal surface wear. Slight wear and very small corner creasing. Staples may be slightly discoloured. Corners may have minute wear. Up to one half-inch light cover crease is acceptable. Interior paper may be slightly off-white.

FINE [fn, from ++ to --] (74-55%)
Not to be confused with fr or f, the abbreviations for the much lower grade of FAIR. Fine is quite a collectable grade. No major creasing or defects, quite carefully read, but multiple times!
FN has no major defects. It does have an accumulation of minor defects, small creases, corner knocks or spine damage. But only minor, no major faults.

VERY GOOD [vg, from + to -] (54-35%)
Despite its name, vg is not very good at all. It is an average used comic book, and the lowest level for most collectors.
VG has moderate wear, cover creasing or spine roll. Perhaps some fading and discolouration of interior pages. It has no pieces out, except possibly a small cover edge, though crosswords, puzzles or coupons may have been completed. Centre pages may be detached or covers loose from a single staple. Minor tape repair may be present.

GOOD [g] (34-15%)
Complete, except for small pieces missing, usually around staples or edges. For reading (even in the bath!) and gap filling until a better grade copy comes along.
G copies will be badly creased, but readable and complete. Pages should not be brittle, but will have lost their suppleness and usually be off-colour.

FAIR [FR or F] (14-5%)
Another contradictory grade. Unfair would describe it better.
FR copies will be very badly damaged. No interior pages missing, but cover will have a soiled or well-scuffed cover with spine badly torn and rolled. Chunks may be missing from cover. Ageing on older titles is to be expected, with interior paper browning as it approaches brittleness. Not a copy for your collection.

POOR [P or PR] (4-1%)
Few dealers would list poor copies unless they are curiosity items.
PR copies can have glue, brown tape, stains, severe tears, extra staples, graffiti, chunks missing (which should be detailed by vendor). For interest's sake only.

For further information on grading, readers are recommended to refer to the Avon published American annual **Overstreet Comicbook Price Guide** (currently in its 25th year), available from most comics shops in hardback or paperback editions.

retail index

Key to abbreviations used

imp	= air imported new issues
back	= back issues stocked
s-p	= small press & fanzines
merch	= videos, trading cards, T-shirts, posters, models, etc
Ind	= US independent comics (non-newsstand & manga)
Brit	= British comics & albums
frgn	= foreign language comics
u/g	= underground comics
gn	= graphic novels & trade paperback editions
STO	= standing order service, (new comics reserved)
RPG	= role playing games

CENTRAL LONDON

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NEW **Acme Too**, 36 Chapel Market, Islington, London N1 (opposite Angel tube). Mon-Sat 10.00-6.30, Sun 10.00-5.00. (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) 0171 278 5444

■ **Adventure Into Comics Inc**, 309 Railton Road, Herne Hill, London SE24 0JN. Mon-Sat 10.30-6. (imp, back, ind, gn, merch, STO, collectable toys) 0171 346 0020

■ **Avalon Comics**, 143 Lavender Hill, London SW11. Mon-Thur 10.00-5.45, Fri 10.00-6.30; Sat 9.30-6.00; Sun 11.00-4.00 (imp, back, ind, Brit, gn, STO) 0171-924 3609

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■ **Dynamic Store!** Units 2-3 Keeley House, 22/30 Keeley Road, Croydon, Surrey. Mon - Sat 9.00 - 6.00; Sun: please phone. (imp, back, Brit, s-p, ind, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, merch) 0181-681 2597

■ **Edge of Forever, The**, 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. Mon-Fri 9.30-6.00; Sat 9-6 (imp, back, s-p merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO) 0181-298 1363

■ **MTCC Trading Cards**, 43 Sidcup Hill, Sidcup, Kent DA14 6HJ. Mon-Sat 8-6; Sun 2-4 (trading cards, merch, memorabilia; Trek-Disney-fantasy-etc) 0181 302 3020

■ **Readers Dream**, 100A Harlington Road West, Feltham (near Heathrow airport) Middx TW14 0JJ. Mon-Sat 9.30-6.00 excl Wed - closed (imp, back, gn, STO) 0181-844 0780

■ **Skinny Melink's**, 66 Loampit Vale, Lewisham, London SE13. Mon-Sat 10-7; Sun 11-6 (imp, back, ind s-p, u/g, gn, STO) 0181-318 0499

■ **They Walk Among Us**, 32 Union Court, Sheen Rd, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1AA. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 excl Fri 9.30-6 (imp, merch, back, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, fantasy/s-f/horror bks, STO, sub-culture) Phone/fax 0181 948 8476

■ **30th Century Comics**, Unit 5, Putney Market (1st Floor), Putney Exchange Shopping Centre, Putney High Street, London SW15 1TW. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, gn, STO, film & tv, fantasy/horror/sf bks) 0181 788 2052

■ **Time Trek**, 46 High Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1TR. Mon - Sat 9 - 5.30 (late Thurs to 8) (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, sf TV & film related merch, STO) 0181 313 0677

■ **Universal Comics**, 5 Bell Parade Bell Rd, Hounslow TW3 3NS. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, ind, merch, gn, STO) 0181 814 0557

■ **Westside Comics**, 392 Uxbridge Road, Hayes, Middlesex UB4 0EL. Mon-Fri 11.00-6.00, Sat 10.00-6.00 (imp, back, ind, Brit, gn, STO). 0181-813 5019

SOUTH EAST

■ **ACE Comics**, 1, Headgate Buildings, St John's St, Colchester, Essex C02 7AD. Mon -Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, u/g, Brit, ind gn STO RPG, rock t-shirts) 01206 561912

■ **The American Comic Shop**, 1 Church Street, Chatham, Kent ME4 4BS (just off High St). Mon-Thurs 10-5.30, Fri 9.30-6.00, Sat 9-5.30. (imp, back, gn, STO, merch, Trek & Star Wars merch, manga, videos) 01634 817410

■ **Andy's Comic Cavern**, Windsor Open Market (back of Woolworth's), Bachelors Acre, Windsor. Saturdays only 7.30-4.00 (imp, back, ind, gn, STO) Free delivery for Windsor & Slough area. 01753 621978

■ **Calamity Comics 2**, 90 Queens Road, The Broadway, Watford, Herts WD1 2LA. Mon-Tues 10-5.30; closed Wed; Thurs & Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, fantasy tv & film bks & merch, videos) 01923 249293

■ **Cartoon Shop**, 22 Southernhay, Town Centre, Basildon, Essex SS14 1EL. Mon - Wed & Sat 10-6, Thurs & Fri 10-8 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, RPG) 01268 534194

■ **Cartoon Shop**, 368 Chartwell West, Top Floor, Victoria Circus Shopping Centre, Southend-on-Sea, Essex. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, RPG) 01702 613021

■ **Central City Comics**, 4 Eagle Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 1JB. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 6.00. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, frgn, gn, STO) 01473 233017

■ **Comic Showcase**, 19-20 St Clements St, Oxford. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, gn, STO) 01865-723680

■ **David's Comics**, 3 Sydney Street, Brighton, Sussex BN1 4EN. Mon-Fri 9.30-6; Sat 9-6. (imp, back, ind, u/g, Brit, STO, gn, exchange, club discount) 01273 690223

■ **Fantastic Store Ink**, 14 Gardner Street, Brighton BN1 1UP. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-6. (imp, back, ind, s-p, merch, Brit, u/g, STO, original art) 01273 670012

■ **Incognito Comic Shop**, 1-2 The Friars, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2AS. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, ind, merch, gn, Brit, STO, film/tv merch) phone/fax: 01227 785898

■ **Incognito Comic Shop**, 21 Union St, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EB. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, ind, merch, gn, Brit, STO, film/tv merch) phone/fax: 01622-683642

■ **Renegade Comics**, Unit 11, Elmes Arcade, High St, Stevenage Old Town, Herts SG1 3EF. Mon-Sat 9.00-5.30 (imp back merch s-p ind Brit u/g gn STO RPG) 01438 747468

■ **Reservoir Frogs Comic Shop**, Jubilee Shopping Hall, Gardner St, Brighton BN1 1UN. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) 01273 202972

■ **Tall Toad Comics**, Amersham Market - every Tues; Hemel Hempstead market - every Wed & Saturday. (imp, back, merch, gn, STO).

■ **Universal Comics**, Unit 27A, Indoor Village Market, High St, Slough SL6 5AG Mon-Sat 9.30-6.30 (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO) 01753 571 799

■ **Universal Comics**, 16 London Road, Staines. Mon-Fri 10.30-6.30, Sat 10-6.30 (imp, back, ind, merch, gn, STO) 01784 460300

■ **Whatever Comics**, 2 Burgate Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2HH. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, model kits) 01227 453226

■ **Whatever Comics**, 5 Middle Row, High Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1TF. Mon-Sat 10.00-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, model kits) 01622 681041

■ **Wonderworld**, 133 St Mary Street, Southampton S01 1NX. Tues-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO, FRPG & miniatures) 01703 634658

MIDLANDS

Abstract Sprocket, St Benedicts Indoor Market, 21 St Benedicts St, Norwich, Norfolk NR2 4PF. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, ind, s-p, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) 01603 667700

■ **Another World**, 23 Silver Street, Leicester LE1 5EU. Mon - Sat 9.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, rock t-shirts, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 0116 2515266

■ **Another World**, 11 Market Street, Nottingham. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, rock t-shirts, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 0115 9484122

■ **Arrival Comics & Books**, 2 Broad Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1HP. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, Brit) 01902-313 660

■ **Bookworm**, 39 Tower St, King's Lynn, Norfolk. Mon-Sat 11-4 (back, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, fantasy & sf, early Penguins, general fic & non-fic, records) 01553 760904/771880

■ **Comics Unlimited**, 4 Clair Court, Lime Street, Bedford MK40 1NH. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, gn, Brit, u/g, STO, RPG) 01234 218984

■ **Comics Unlimited**, 26 Town Centre, Hatfield, Herts AL10 0LD. Wed-Mon 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO, RPG) 01707 256788

■ **Comics Unlimited**, Unit 11, The Arcade, Letchworth, Hertfordshire. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, gn, Brit, u/g, STO, RPG) 01462 480018

■ **Demon Comics**, 102 Eastgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1QT. Mon - Sat 10-6. (imp, back, merch, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, t-shirts, sci-fi models) 01452 330370

■ **Fantasy World**, 10 Market Square Arcade, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1NU. Mon-Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, rock t-shirts, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 01782 279294/fax 01782 202381

■ **The Final Frontier**, 29 St Nicholas Place, Leicester LE1 4LD. Mon - Fri 9.30 - 5.30; Sat 9.00 - 5.00. (imp, back, ind, Brit, gn, STO) Established 1984 0116 251 4347

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 31 Cross Cheaping, Coventry CV1 1HF (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, film/ tv material, sf/horror bks) ph/fax 01203 229672

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 129 Middle Walk, Broadmarsh Centre, Nottingham NG1 7LN. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, film/tv, videos, STO) 0115 958 4706

■ **Ground Zero**, 11 Handley Arcade, Mansfield, Notts NG18 1NQ. Mon - Sat 9.00 - 5.00 (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, STO, accessories) 01623 22017

■ **Mephisto Comics**, 81 Ber Street, Norwich, NR1 3RD. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, merch, gn, ind, s-p, u/g, Brit, STO) 01603 762762

■ **Nostalgia & Comics**, 14-16 Smallbrook, Queensway, Birmingham. Mon - Thurs 9.15 - 5.45, Fri + Sat 9.15 - 6.00 (imp, back, merch, gn, ind, s-p, u/g, Brit, STO) 0121 643 0143

■ **Nowhere Comics**, 3 Kings Court, Bridge Street (next to Bridge St Records) Walsall. Mon-Sat 9.00-5.30, (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, gn, STO, frgn, accessories)01922 643352

NEW **Nowhere Comics Elsewhere**, Crown Centre (next to library), Stourbridge town centre. Mon-Sat 9.00-5.30, (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, gn, STO, frgn, accesories) 01384 370536

■ **Page 45**, 9 Market Street, Nottingham NG1 6HY. Mon-Sat 9-6. (imp, back, s-p, ind, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, STO, indie comix & indie merch specialists, manga) 0115 9508045

■ **Phoenix Comix**, 43 Kettering Road, Northampton. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.00 (imp, back, merch, ind, gn STO) 01604 602311

■ **Rebel Comics**, 72 Commercial Road, Hereford HR1 2BP. Mon-Sat 10-6. (imp, back, ind, merch, RPG, STO) 01432 358 355

■ **Time Zone**, 12 Fish Street (off Butcher Row), Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 1UR. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 6.00. (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO, RPG) 01743 365192

■ **Zoom Comics!!**, Unit 3 Inshops Centre, 65 South Parade, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B72 1QX Mon-Sat 9-5.30. (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) 0121 354 7500

NORTH WEST

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 92 Bold St, Liverpool L1 4HR. (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, STO, film/tv material, sf & horror bks) phone/fax: 0151 707 1491

■ **Imagination Station**, Unit 28, Portland Shopping Centre, Botchergate, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1NT. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, merch, s-p, ind, Brit, gn, STO)

■ **Odyssey 7**, 21 Hanging Ditch, Corn Exchange Buildings, Manchester M4 3ES. Mon -Sat 9.30-5.30. (imp, back, sf-fantasy-horror books, postcards, videos, badges, stills, soundtracks, LF filmbooks, Trek, Doctor Who) 0161 832 7044

■ **Odyssey 7**, Precinct Centre, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9RN. Mon - Sat 9.30am - 5.30pm (imp, back, sf-fantasy-horror novels, postcards, posters, badges, stills, LF film books, Trek, Dr Who, etc) 0161 273 6666

■ **Planet Eater**, 5-7 Union Street Southport, Lancs PR9 0QF Mon - Sat: 9 - 6 Sun: 12-4 (imp, back, merch, model kits, Trek, action figures, STO) 01704 548629

■ **Thunderbooks**, 332 Lytham Rd, Blackpool FY4 1DW. 10-5.30 Mon-Tues Thurs-Sat (& Sundays June-Oct inc.); Wed 1-3.30pm (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO, media collectors' items) 01253-348321 fax: 407813

■ **Thunderbooks II**, 116 Friargate, Preston, PR1 9EE. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, merch, s-p, ind, Brit, gn, STO, RPG) 01772-204287

■ **Time Zone**, 3 Academy Place, Warrington, Cheshire WA1 2NR. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO, RPG) 01925 651185

■ **William St News**, 12 William St., Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 1LD. Mon-Sat 6am-6pm. (imp, merch, ind, gn, RPG, STO, Brit) 01229 823112

■ **Worlds Apart**, 58-60 Lime St (city centre), Liverpool. Mon-Sat 10-6 excl Fri 10-7 (imp, back, ind, merch, s-p, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, fantasy film mags) 0151 707 0839

NORTH EAST

■ **Books N' Comics**, Unit 15, Forbes Building, Linthorpe Road, Middlesborough, Cleveland TS1 4AW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, gn, STO, fantasy gn, film mags, Dr Who, Trek) 01642 249143

■ **City Comics**, 120 High St West, Sunderland City Centre, SR1 1TR. Mon-Sat 10-6 excl Wed 10-2 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, gn, STO, comics bought: cash/credit) 0191 564 0613

■ **Comicville**, Ground Floor, 54 The Arcade, The Piece Hall, Halifax HX1 1RE, Yorkshire. Tues-Fri 9.30-5; Sat 10-5 Sun 11-5 (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, model kits, toys, Who, Trek, videos) 01422 351119

■ **Comicville**, 10 Byram Arcade, Westgate, Hudderfield HD1 1ND. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, model kits, toys, Who, Trek, videos) 01484 455044

■ **Comix USA**, 116 West St., Boston, Lincolnshire. PE21 8QZ (imp, back, ind, merch, gn, STO, limited RPG) 01205 363929

■ **Dells Comic Shop**, 5 Duke St, Bradford 1, Yorks. Mon-Sat 9-5 excl Wed 9-3 (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO, horror masks, tv fantasy mags) 01274 770 541

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 12 Matilda, off the Moor, Sheffield, Yorks. Mon-Fri 10-6; Sat 9.15-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, original art, model kits, sf & fantasy gns, horror mags, newspaper strip bks) 0114 276 9475

■ **Hysteria Comics**, Unit 2, The Arches, Park Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS24 7PH. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, gn, STO, film mags) 01429 236952

■ **Nu.Earth Comics**, 20 Fetter Lane, York Y01 1EH. Mon-Fri 10-7; Sat 9-7; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, art bks) 01904 611461 (fax: 651453)

■ **Odyssey 7**, 30 Eastgate, Leeds LS2 7JL. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30 (imp, back, LF film books, sf - fantasy - horror bks, posters, postcards, badges, stills, Star Trek, Doctor Who, etc) 0113 242 6325

■ **Sheffield Space Centre**, 33 The Wicker, Sheffield, Yorks. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 5.00 excl Wed. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, gn, STO, Star Trek items) 0114 275 8905

■ **The Last Picture Show**, 40 The Lanes, The Oasis, Meadowhall Centre, Sheffield S9 1EP. Mon-Thur 10-8, Fri 10-9, Sat 9-7, Sun 12-5. (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, film-rock memorabilia) 0114 256 9604

■ **Travelling Man**, 23 Headingley Lane, Hyde Park Corner, Headingley, Leeds LS6 1BL. Mon-Sat 10.30-5.45 (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO, RPG, customisable card games) 0113 278 0417

■ **Travelling Man**, Unit 8/9 The Corn Exchange, Call Lane, Leeds LS1 7BR. Mon-Thurs 10-5.30, Fri-Sat 9-5.30, Sun 11-5 (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO, RPG, customisable card games) 0113 242 7227

WEST COUNTRY

American Dream Comics, Unit 2, 17 Pickwick Road, Corsham, Wilts SN13 9BQ. Mon-Thurs 10-5, Fri & Sat 9-6. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, gn, STO, original art, hobby kits, CDs) 01249 701647

■ **Dead Famous**, 72 Walcot St, Bath, Avon BA1 5BD (above Nashers Music Store). Tues-Fri 11-5.30; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, SF-TV-film-rock memorabilia, bks, Wars, Trek, Who, Anderson...) 01225 332298

■ **Floppy Tongue Comics**, 96 Fisherton Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 7QY. Mon-Fri 11.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, gn, STO) 01722 331107

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 30 Penn St., Bristol BS1 3AS. Mon-Fri 10.00-5.30, Sat 10.00-6.00 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, film & tv, videos, STO) 0117 929 8692

■ **Forever People**, 35 Park Street, Bristol BS1 5NH. Mon-Sat 10.00-6.00 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, sf/fantasy new & 2nd hand bks, RPG, videos, tv sf memorabilia, sub-culture, body art) 0117 926 5454

■ **Kathies Comics**, 20 Market Avenue, Plymouth, PL1 1PH. Mon - Fri 9.30 - 5.30; Sat 9.00 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO) 01752 257800

■ **Paradox Comics**, 103 Old Town Market, Dear Hay Lane, Poole, Dorset BH15 1NZ. Mon-Fri 10.30-5; Sat 10-5 (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, gn, STO, videos) 01202 661346

■ **Purple Haze Comics, Records & Books**, 58 Eastlake Walk, Drakes Circus Shopping Centre, Plymouth, Devon PL1 1BX. Mon-Fri 10-5.30, Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, mags, merch, film/tv material, sf/horror bks, gen bks, videos, Trek/Wars merch, tapes/cds) 01752 254136

■ **Wonderworld**, 803 Christchurch Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset BH7 6AP. Tues-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO, FRPG & miniatures, Games Workshop specialist stockist) 01202 422964

■ **Wonderworld**, 143 Gloucester Rd, Bristol. Mon-Sat 9-7 (imp, back, ind, gn, merch, STO, RPG, u/g, Brit, original art) 0117 924 4655

ISLE OF WIGHT

■ **Astounding Comics**, 61 Pyle Street, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1UL. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, videos) 01983 525320

WALES

■ **Anime Projects Shop**, 19 High St, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 1NP. Mon-Sat 9-5 excl Wed 9-12 (anime, manga, merch, gn, STO, CoBRA) 01248 370044

■ **Cardiff Fantasy Centre**, 1st Floor, Jacobs Market, West Canal Wharf, Cardiff. Sats only 9.30-5 (imp, back s-p, merch, ind, gn, STO, videos; establ 13 yrs) 01222 563005

■ **Comics & Collectibles**, Stall 75, Pontypridd Indoor Market, Mid-Glamorgan, South Wales. Tues 10-2, Fri 1-4.30, Wed & Sat 9.30-5. (imp, back, ind, gn, STO, model kits, trading card specialists)

■ **Comix Shoppe**, 13 Shoppers Walk, Swansea SA1 3AY. Mon-Fri 10-5, Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, manga videos, Games Workshop stockists, customisable card games) 01792 642097

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 5 Duke Street, Cardiff. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, frgn, gn, STO) 01222 228885

■ **Journey into Mystery**, The Emporium, 34 Castle Arcade, Cardiff. Tues - Fri 11.00 - 5.30; Sat 9.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, gn, STO, indie records & CDs)

■ **Negative Zone**, Provision Market Gallery, High Street, Newport, Gwent NP9 1DD. Mon - Sat 9.00am - 5.00pm. (imp, back, s-p, ind, gn, Brit, STO) 01633 222159

SCOTLAND

■ **A1 Books & Comics**, 31-35 Parnie Street, Glasgow G1 5RJ. Mon-Wed 9.30-5.30; Thurs-Sat 9.30-6.00; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO) 0141 552 6692

■ **City Centre Comics** *now at*: 168 Buchanan St, Glasgow G1 2LW. Mon-Wed 10-5.30; Thurs + Fri 10-6; Sat 10-5.30; Sun 12-5. (back issues only) 0141 331 1215 (eves: 632 2786)

■ **Earth 2 Comics**, Argyle Shopping Centre, 28 Argyle St, Glasgow G2 8AD. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.00; Sat 9.30-5.30. (imp, back, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, ind, merch, STO) 0141-226 5414

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 2 - 3 Teviot Place, Edinburgh, EH1 2QZ. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 5.30, excl Thurs till 6.30; Sun 12-5. (imp, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, gn, STO) 0131-225 8613

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 168 Buchanan Street, Glasgow G1 2LW. Mon-Sat 10.00-5.30, Sun 12.00-5.00. (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, Brit, gn, STO) 0141 331 1215

■ **Future Shock**, 89 Byres Road, Partick, Glasgow G11. Mon-Sat 10-6; Sun 1-5 (imp, back, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, SF & horror gn & hbk, film bks & mags, artwork, jewellery) 0141 339 8184

■ **Justice Comics**, Unit 36, The Arcade, Stirling FK8 1AX. Mon-Sat 10-5. (imp, back, ind, gn, STO, merch) 01786 447687

■ **Plan 9 Comics**, 9 Rosemount Viaduct, Aberdeen AB1 1NE. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30 (Thurs till 7.30), Sun 1 - 4.30. (imp, back, Trek/Wars merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, RPG & war game specialist, MTG, STO, model kits, magick/tarot) phone/fax: 01224 624467

■ **Reel Heroes**, 100 Barclay Street, Cowdenbeath, Fife KY4 9LD. Sundays only at Kinross Market; 7-day mail order at above address (imp, back, STO, merch specialist, tv/film videos) 01383 515542

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Big Comics**, Unit 20, Smithfield Market, Smithfield Square, Belfast. Tues-Fri 10.00-5.00, Sat 9.00-5.30 (back, s-p, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, RPG) 01232-715205 (eves)

■ **Dark Horizons**, 30a Chichester Street, Belfast BT1 4LD (near City Hall) Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, subculture, film mags) 01232 233808

■ **Fantasy Zone**, 7 Linenhall St., Ballymena BT43 5AJ. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, ind, t-shirts, videos, bks, stationery) 01266 46840

■ **Talisman Comics**, 47 Winetavern Street, Belfast BT1 1JQ Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) 01232 438744

■ **US Comics**: now available in Belfast at **Cardvalue** (Yorkgate), **Newsbeat** (Park Centre) & **Simpsons** (Malone Road). More information 01232 611846 (eves)

IRISH REPUBLIC

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 36 Dawson Street, Dublin 2. Mon-Sat 10.00-6.00 excl Thurs 10.00-7.00 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, Brit, gn, STO) 0035 3167 10888

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 39/40 Roches Street, Limerick. Mon-Sat 9.45-6.15 excl Fri 9.45-7.00 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, Brit, gn, STO)

RETAILERS:

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COMICS ECONOMICS

Back issue comic books are considered by many to be a high-yield low-risk investment. With this awareness, few new comics are genuinely scarce, although low print run launches and key issues introducing new characters who later become popular do keep the interest peaked. With their ever-diminishing quantity, older issues continue to rise, while speculation continues over current trends. As a guide, Comics Economics produces charts compiling current market favourites from US trade titles. *Compiled by Phil Hall*

COLLECTABILITY of comics can be determined by a myriad mix including nostalgia, hero-worship/escapism, violence and fantasy sex. But a key factor for comic fans is potential value — above and beyond the quality of story-telling or art. The "share value" on comics can be increased by any of the above factors (with big-gun violence having recently been eclipsed by the sexual fantasies of "hot babe" comics).

But throughout trends, from content to packaging gimmicks, investment remains king of the collecting market. Key issues, featuring first appearances of characters (or creators), continue to be the most sought-after prizes. In fact, rarity dominates to the point where, ironically, most of the following are considered too valuable to be read. Fortunately, almost all of them have been reprinted.

The collapse of the speculator market led to the bulk of recent back issues dropping in price. But, despite publishers disassociating current editions from the past to attract new readers, the demand for pre-1970 comics continues to grow, especially for scarce high grade copies and low grade reading copies, with mid-grade (VG to FN+) being slow movers.

Top ten US comics of all time

1	**Action Comics** 1 (1st Superman)	$175,000
2	**Detective Comics** 27 (1st Batman)	$140,000
3	**Superman Comics** 1	$95,000
4	**Marvel Comics** 1	$85,000
5=	**Detective Comics** 1	$65,000
	Flash Comics 1	$65,000
7=	**All American** 16	$55,000
	Whiz Comics 1 (#2 on cover)	$55,000
9=	**Batman** 1	$50,000
	Captain America Comics 1	$50,000

Top ten Silver Age Marvel titles

1	**Amazing Fantasy** 15 (1st Spider-Man)	$22,000
2	**Amazing Spider-Man** 1	$16,000
3	**Fantastic Four** 1	$14,000
4	**Incredible Hulk** 1	$8,000
5	**X-Men** 1	$4,800
6	**Journey Into Mystery** 83 (1st Thor)	$3,300
7	**Tales of Suspense** 39 (1st Iron Man)	$2,800
8	**Fantastic Four** 2	$2,700
9	**Tales to Astonish** 27 (1st Ant-Man)	$2,500
10	**Amazing Spider-Man** 2	£2,300

Top ten Silver Age DC titles

1	**Showcase** 4 (1st S/A Flash)	$20,000
2	**Showcase** 8 (2nd Flash)	$6,000
3=	**Brave and the Bold** 28 (1st JLA)	$4,300
	Flash 105	$4,300
5	**Showcase** 22 (1st Green Lantern)	$4,200
6	**Detective** 225 (1st Martian Manhunter)	$4,000
7	**Adventure Comics** 247 (1st Legion/S-Heroes)	$3,700
8=	**Showcase** 6 (1st Challengers of the Unknown)	$3,000
	Showcase 9 (1st Lois Lane)	$3,000
10	**Showcase** 13 (3rd Flash)	$2,800

Diamond top twenty comics: 1995

The following chart includes Marvel titles distributed by Diamond Comics Distributors before Marvel's acquisition of Heroes World Distribution. It must be noted that with the exception of **DC versus Marvel** and two issues of **Spawn**, all other titles in the chart were released prior to Diamond losing Marvel distribution. **DC versus Marvel** is officially the biggest selling comic of the year, but it is DC's only entry in the top 20. Marvel and Image dominate the rest of the chart.

1	**DC versus Marvel**	DC
2	**X-Men Omega**	Marvel
3	**Spawn 37**	Image
4	**The Amazing X-Men 4**	Marvel
5	**Spawn 32**	Image
6	**The Astonishing X-Men 4**	Marvel
7	**The Amazing X-Men 3**	Marvel
8	**Spawn 38**	Image
9	**Weapon X 4**	Marvel
10	**The Astonishing X-Men 3**	Marvel
11	The Amazing X-Men 2	Marvel
12	Generation NeXt 4	Marvel
13	Gen-13 #6	Image
14	The Astonishing X-Men 2	Marvel
15	Spawn 36	Image
16	The Amazing X-Men 1	Marvel
17	Weapon X 3	Marvel
18	Spawn 34	Image
19	Gambit & The X-Temals	Marvel
20	Weapon X 2	Marvel

Top ten current writer-artists

The popularity of an artist has always had a positive effect on the sales and back issue values of comics. During the 1960s, Neal Adams and Jim Steranko dominated. In the Seventies, Barry (Windsor-) Smith, Berni(e) Wrightson and Mike Kaluta were all considered "hot". In the Eighties, Frank Miller, George Perez and John Byrne were among the favourites.

Writers have rarely affected sales, although the 1980s British writers' invasion of US comics has helped balance things.

This issue's chart of current favourite one man writer/artists separates these particular creators from the two other charts. Writer/artists have normally attained initial acclaim as artists and then moved into writing their own scripts. This chart is based on findings in several US comic magazines' surveys factored with sales on current work where applicable.

1	Todd McFarlane	**Spawn**
2	John Byrne	**Wonder Woman**
3	Frank Miller	**Sin City**
4	Bill Tucci	**Shi: The Way of the Warrior**
5	Mike Mignola	**Hellboy**
6	Jeff Smith	**Bone**
7	Dave Sim	**Cerebus**
8	Dale Keown	**Pitt**
9	Dan Jurgens	**Sensational Spider-Man**
10	Masamune Shirow	**Ghost in the Shell**

Movers & Shakers tips for '96

Each year **Comics International**'s *Movers & Shakers* column recommends creators and titles which, according to our ITMites, have been well received or have sold well during the last 12 months. The following chart is a little different as it risks suggesting who or what might be hot in 1996 — comics and creators alike. Guesswork, but we'd like to think educated guesswork...

1	Trent Kanuiga	**Creed**
2	The new **Fantastic Four**	Marvel/Wildstorm
3	**Kingdom Come**	Mark Waid & Alex Ross
4	The new **Avengers**	Marvel/Deodato(?)
5	**Justice League of America**	DC/Grant Morrison
6	Chris Claremont	Marvel X-books (?)
7	Humberto Ramos	**X-Nation, Impulse**
8	Fabian Nicieza	**Marvels III, 22 Brides**
9	**Preacher**	Garth Ennis & Steve Dillon
10	Glenn Fabry	**Batman/Dredd III** (if not 1997)

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Comics International invites you to submit your comics-related queries, both for your own enlightenment, and that of our general readership.

OK, so we sometimes get things wrong! While I'd like to say it was a deliberate ploy to encourage reader response, I know you wouldn't believe a word of it. However, our latest blunder has created an avalanche of response — going to show what a knowledgeable lot you are. Among the feedback, we had a phone call from UKCAC's Frank Plowright, a fab postcard from artist Woodrow Phoenix and the following more detailed responses to the question printed last issue about a mysterious 1983 DC team...

(Dez Skinn / Editor-in-shame)

Howard Stangroom
London

OKAY, so you're going to get billions of answers to Mark Frostick's letter, but here's mine anyway: The comic in question was **Thriller**, whose tagline was, "She has seven seconds [as in duelling, not units of time] to save the world". This may account for his confusion with **Sovereign Seven**.

It ran for twelve issues from 1983 to 1984. As to whether it's any good; well, **The Panelhouse's** Fiona Jerome says it's brilliant and if there's a man brave enough to disagree with her, I've yet to meet him!

David Hoffman
100740.3617@Compuserve.com

THE TEAM mentioned by Mark Frostrick was called the "7 Seconds" and featured in a comic called **Thriller**. It was one of DC's first deluxe format books (after **Camelot 3000**).

Robert Loren Fleming wrote a piece for DC editor-in-chief [at the time] Dick Giordano's regular *Meanwhile...* column about the title. This column, which appeared in all February 1984 DC titles, was probably what Mark saw.

I have no idea what the issues sell for, but I do have the whole run and I certainly enjoyed it very much. Any Ambush Bug fans who remember a villain whose head was used as an ashtray in the first issue of the Bug's first mini-series? His name was Scabbard, a **Thriller** villain, courtesy of Fleming.

Hope this answers the question. Keep up the good work at **Comics International**.

Rob Storey, 90 The Grove
Marton, Middlesborough

IN response to Mark Frostrick's letter in **Comics International** #63, I hope I can help.

The team mentioned in the advert sounds much like the "7 Seconds" that appeared in **Thriller** by Robert Loren Fleming and Trevor Von Eeden, which ran for 12 issues in 1983-84.

Led by Angela Thriller (who could become part of inanimate objects and control them), the 7 Seconds consisted of:

- Salvo — a marksman who only wounds; Proxy — a burns victim whose artificial skin only lasts 24 hours.
- Data — the son of the US president, who drives his car with his brain.
- White Satin — can induce mental or physical sensations through touch.
- Crackerjack — an escape artist and safecracker from Honduras.
- Beaker Parrish — an artificial nine foot tall Catholic priest.
- Dan Grove — a TV news cameraman.

I'm not sure if it's any good as I never got around to looking at it.

A question: Can anyone confirm if **The Legion of Super-Heroes Special** listed in the UK Price Guide actually exists, or is it really **The Substitute Heroes Special** which is listed in its proper place?

*One thing almost all of those writing and phoning agreed upon was that **Thriller** was an excellent series and usually costs about 25p a copy. (At least, until retailers read this page, it was!) As to your **Legion** question, the UK Guide appears to be out on a limb on this one. As nobody else (people or guides) that we know has heard of the **Legion Special**, you'd expect such a rare item to be worth more than £1.25 in near mint, wouldn't you? Dez*

Del Rooney
Petershill Court, Glasgow

GOTTA few questions for you, Big Dezzy, old bean, old sprout...

1. **Comics International's** Internet column is great and I'm sure many readers are thinking of getting a modem and joining in, but, aren't the computer dealers, BT and all the Internet suppliers being rather economical with the truth when they state that Internet can be accessed for the price of a phone call?

Even at the local rate of 3p a minute (some local calls cost more), someone on the Net for two hours a day, 14 hours a week, would be paying around £302.40 a quarter and that doesn't even include VAT or line rental. So, why don't the communications companies advertise the facts?

2. In the past 15 years or so we've seen hot artist after hot artist. Byrne, Lee, Liefeld, McFarlane, ad nauseum. All these plonkers have been male, with not one hot female artist among them.

So, would you agree that all comic readers are, in the main, male chauvinist pigs? Or are dames in comic land treated as almost, but not quite, as good as their male counterparts? As is the norm in many other stratas of the media. Personally, I highly rate Marie Severin.

For my sins, I launched the first national UK chatline companies (Grapevine and Speakeasy). As such, I also led a campaign against BT to reduce the cost of calls. While we beat Oftel (and Jeremy Paxman on live TV!), we couldn't get BT to budge. It isn't always the service provider at fault.

But our revised Networks column will be looking at the costs involved in getting on-line. So watch for an unbiased opinion, Del.

As for female creators, maybe they don't want to draw big and little boys' fantasies. Outside of super-hero comics, there are plenty of talented women the industry.

Paul Register
100 Upperthorpe
Sheffield, South Yorkshire

IN THE November edition of **Comics International** there was a letter regarding the Bravura Gold Stamp Program. While the contents of the letter were understandably confused (after all, this whole incident has been one of the greatest comics-related cons of recent times!), what confused me was the advice given to him by yourselves.

I was under the impression that the whole promotion became defunct when Marvel bought out Malibu. So why the sudden change of story? And why the curiously rushed deadline of November 30? Did Marvel change their minds about refusing to stand by Malibu's promise? Will I finally see the silver edition of Howard Chaykin's **Power & Glory** that I sent off for over a year ago?

Could you please clear this up for me as the whole mess gets more of a nasty smell about it the more I think about it.

While we all still live in hope, at least be consoled by the fact that we weren't charging our readers for post and packing, unlike the American side of the offer. We'll keep you posted on developments — if we can find anybody left at Malibu outside of the colouring department!

Stuart Taylor
30b Wentworth Ave,
Bournemouth

LAST month Grant Doig asked if the BBC was missing out episodes or broadcasting the animated *X-Men* series out of order. Being somewhat of a fan of the series, I can state that the BBC is, in fact, showing the stories in order.

However, Sky One is now showing the series on weekend mornings [and every week day at 4.40pm], but unfortunately has already shown *The Dark Phoenix Saga* and is currently well into the fourth season.

To make things easier to understand, here's the running order for the third season:

Out of the Past 1 & 2
The Phoenix Saga 1-5
No Mutant is an Island
Obsession
Cold Comfort
Savage Land
Savage Heart 1 & 2
The Dark Phoenix Saga 1-4
and *Orphan's End.*

One can only hope that the good ol' Beeb gets around to showing these stories on terrestrial television. But until then, what does everyone make of the entertaining *Spider-Man* series on Saturday mornings?

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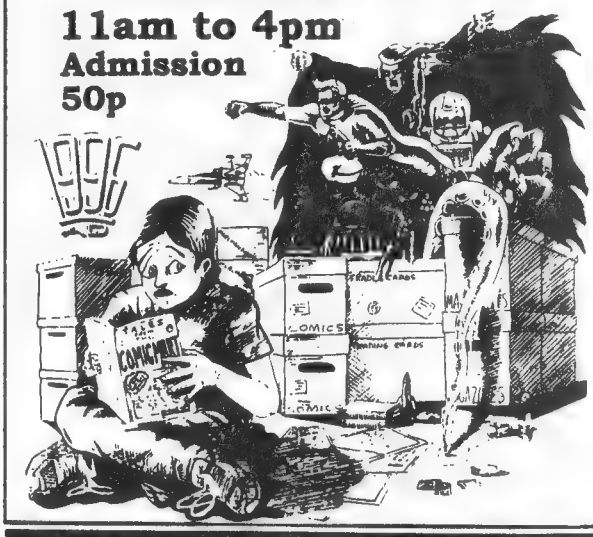

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MAIL ORDER *index*

WITH the ever-increasing diversity of comics and related items being offered to readers through the post, the ***Comics International*** *Mail Order Index has been designed to help the buyer identify specialists in key areas of collecting. Where telephone numbers are given, readers are advised to phone advertisers only during standard working hours.*

Code to abbreviations used:

w/s	= wholesale available
dis	= bulk discount terms
cat	= phone/write for catalogue
s-cat	= sae for catalogue
s-wants	= sae with wants lists
CoBRA	= Comic Book Retailers' mail order protection scheme
cc	= major credit cards accepted
sae	= send stamped, self-addressed envelope with your enquiry

GOLDEN AGE TITLES

Generally acknowledged as being published between 1938 and 1945 but herein designated to cover all pre-Silver Age American comics

■ **Comicana**, 125 East Barnet Rd, Barnet EN4 8RF (dis cat CoBRA cc) 0181-449 5535

■ **Comic Biz**, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 0181 446 3464

■ **Incognito**, 21 Union Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EB. (s-wants, CoBRA, cc) Phone/fax 01622-683642

■ **Silver Acre Comics**, The Studio Cottage, Edern, Pwllheli, Gwynedd LL53 6JD (s-wants, cc) 01758-720 532

SILVER AGE TITLES

Generally deemed to commence in 1955 with DC Comics' hero rebirth through ***Detective 225*** *(introducing the Martian Manhunter) and* ***Showcase 4*** *(introducing the new Flash), herein covering up to late 1960s.*

■ **Comicana**, 125 East Barnet Road, Barnet, EN4 8RF (dis cat CoBRA cc) 0181-449 5535

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■ **Just Comics**, 2 Crossmead Avenue, Greenford, Middx UB6 9TY (cat-28p, CoBRA)

■ **Krypton Komics & Books**, 252 High Rd, Tottenham, London N15 4AJ (cat, cc, wants, CoBRA) 0181-801 5378

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POST-SILVER AGE

Comics from the 1970s to date: Bronze Age-Marvel Age-Lead Age up to Platinum Age-Valiant Age-Image Age. Historians will doubtless decide on a name.

■ **AmerCom**, 36 Glan Morfa, Llandudno Junction, Gwynedd LL29 9AA (s-cat)

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■ **Richard Makinson**, 9 George Street, Ossett, West Yorkshire WF5 9PB (s-cat, dis)

■ **ScotWorld Comics**, 86 Glenburn Ave, Newarthill, Motherwell, Lanarkshire ML1 5EF (s-cat) 01698 732709

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Current or key titles, usually first issues or first appearances of major characters. Investment titles for speculators willing to gamble on what will increase in value.

■ **Comicana**, 125 East Barnet Rd, Barnet, EN4 8RF (dis cat CoBRA cc) 0181-449 5535

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ADVANCE IMPORTS

US comics are not in newsagents, except for almost all DCs and most $1.25 Marvels, shipped seafreight. The following offer air-shipped copies from all major publishers.

■ **ACE Comics**, 1 Headgate Buildings, St Johns St, Colchester, Essex CO2 7AD (wants, cat, CoBRA, cc) 01206 561912

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■ **Edge of Forever, The**, 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc) 0181-298 1363

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 71 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1DG (s-cat cc) 0171 497 2150

■ **Gosh! Strips by Mail**, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH 0171 636 1011

■ **Mega-City Comics**, 18 Inverness Street, Camden Town, London NW1 7HJ (s-cat, cc, CoBRA) 0171 485 9320

■ **Red Hot Comics**, 42 Berridale Ave, Cathcart, Glasgow G44 3AE (CoBRA, s-wants) phone/fax: 0141-637 0162

■ **Timezone**, 12 Fish Street, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 1UR (dis, cat, wants) 01743 365192

LIMITED EDITIONS

Many high-profile mini-series and one-shots are also available in limited, numbered and often autographed editions (s&n). New titles, to acquire copyright, can also appear in small print-run "ashcan" editions (ash).

■ **Comicana**, 125 East Barnet Rd, Barnet, Herts EN4 8RF (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc, ash, s&n) 0181-449 5535

■ **Edge of Forever, The**, 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc, s&n) 0181-298 1363

TRADING CARDS

An increasing number of dealers carry a wide range of comics-related trading cards and their peripherals (files, folders, etc).

■ **Adventure Seekers!**, 105 Hullbrook Road, Billesley, Birmingham, B13 0LE (cat, wants) 0121 444 0986

■ **Beyond Comics & Books**, 76 Harlescott Road Nunhead, London SE15 3BZ (s-cat, s-wants, sae, CoBRA) tel/fax 0171 639 7171

■ **C&J Collectibles**, 14 Church Ave., Swillington, West Yorks LS26 8QH (s-cat, CoBRA) 0113-287 3228

■ **Comicana**, 125 East Barnet Road, Barnet, EN4 8RF (dis cat CoBRA cc) 0181-449 5535

■ **Discount Trading Cards**, 3 Waterford Ave, Romiley, Stockport, Cheshire SK6 4HL (cat, wants, dis, CoBRA) 0161 427 1867

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ORIGINAL ART

With artists having their originals returned by publishers, an increasing number of pages are now being made available.

■ **Anime Projects Shop**, 19 High St, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 1NP (anime cels, s-cat, cc, CoBRA) 01248 370044

■ **Conquistador Comic Art Mail Order**, 158 Kent House Rd, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1JY (wants, CoBRA, cat, cc) 0181-659 9714

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■ **Comic Book Postal Auctions Limited**, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 0171 586 3007

■ **Flights of Fantasy**, 82b Broadway, Bexleyheath DA6 7LW (cat) 0181-298 1363

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■ **Just Comics**, 2 Crossmead Avenue, Greenford, Middlesex UB6 9TY (w/s only, CoBRA) 0181 578 1308

MANGA TITLES

English language translations and Japanese-style American comics.

■ **Anime Projects Shop**, 19 High St, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 1NP (anime, w/s, s-cat, cc, CoBRA) 01248 370044

■ **Edge of Forever, The**, 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc) 0181-298 1363

ART & REFERENCE

Comics history reference magazines & books (ref) plus art books (art) and newspaper strip compilations (strip).

■ **Conquistador Comic Art Mail Order**, 158 Kent House Rd, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1JY (wants, CoBRA, ref, art, strip, cat, cc) 0181-659 9714

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ALTERNATIVE & BIOG

The following carry an extensive range of biographical and slice-of-life titles (Fantagraphics, Maus, Crumb, Pekar, etc)

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***Review codes:** General competitive performance of a title is measured on a scale of 1 to 10. A specific issue's quality, as measured against previous issues: <- - -> to <+ + +>.*

*Two ratings are used for the sake of detailed and fair coverage. The number following each review (on a scale of 1 to 10) is a quality comparison with similar titles currently being published. We make no attempt to compare **Bone** to **X-Men**, but review each within the context of its own genre.*

The individual issue is also rated within the confines of its previous issues. Hence a comparatively dull title may get a low number but a high rating for the specific issue reviewed (ranging from <-> to <+ + +> if there has been a notable improvement.

***Reviews Editor:** Sarah Bolesworth*

Reviewing panel: Mo Baig (MB), Simon Bowland (SiB), Grant S Doig (GSD), Steven Fox (SF), David Gentle (DG), James Gibbs (JG), Rol Hirst (RH), Richard Hopkins (RHo), Richard J Johnston (RJJ), Daniel Mokades (DM), Peter C Phillips (PCP), Ian R Salmon (IRS), Stuart Taylor (ST), Paul Wood (PaW) and Alan Woollcombe (AW).

DARK HORSE

3x3 Eyes: Curse of the Gesu 2

by Takada

<-> Yakumo's life is falling to pieces: his place has been trashed, his buddies are scared of him and there's a weird figure in a mac who is trailing him. The writing is by turns funny and serious. The expressions in the art tell a lot, although it is a little bit sparse. (PaW) **8**

Dirty Pair: Fatal But Not Serious 5

by Warren

<+> Armed forces move into the convention building to finish the job while the sun goes supernova, causing a chain reaction. The Virtual TV hosts televise their own deaths for anyone left watching and Yuri succeeds in killing her alter-ego. Both Adam Warren's art and humour are top-notch. (PaW) **9**

Ghost and The Shadow

by Moench & Baker + Kolle

Awakened from cryogenic sleep, The Shadow joins forces with Ghost to thwart a demonic invasion of Earth. Unusually lacklustre Doug Moench script contributes to this misfire one-shot. (PCP) **4**

Gunsmith Cats 8

by Sonoda

<+> Minnie May and Taki track down the bomb to Bean Bandit's car and try to disarm it, but they're interrupted by a mob agent. Kenichi Sonoda is — as always — on top form in both art and story. By the end, you really do have to feel sorry for Minnie May. (PaW) **9**

Oh My Goddess!: Love Potion 9

by Fujishima

Urd creates a love potion to finally get Keiichi and Belldandy together but accidentally drinks some of it! It looks like the author is getting bored for a story with this much comedic potential to raise only a few chuckles. Disappointing. (PaW) **6**

Sin City: Silent Night

by Miller

There are not many artists who could have got away with this: A completely silent Christmas story — no dialogue, just pictures — from the depths of Sin City. Although Frank Miller's dialogue is usually as noteworthy as his art, you don't really miss it here. The art is *so* strong, it really is all you need. (RH) **8**

Star Wars: Empire's End 2

by Veitch & Baikie

<+> Luke Skywalker's plans to set up a base camp on the planet Ossus have hit a glitch when the planet's leader, Okko, is frozen in carbonite by the Emperor Palpatine. Luke vows revenge, but Palpatine is nearing the end of his body's lifespan and needs a clone in which to survive. That's when Skywalker's children enter the fray. Entertaining yarn made all the better by the Jim Baikie artwork. (SiB) **8**

You're Under Arrest! 1

by Fujishima

A tale of two female police officers: Sensible Miyuki and hot-headed Natsumi, who watched too many cop movies. In this first issue they cope with a pop star's parking violations and Natsumi's driving lessons! Like Kosuke Fujishima's **Oh My Goddess!**, the art is attractive and clean. Unlike **Oh, My Goddess!**, it's funny. (PaW) **8**

DC COMICS

Action Comics 718

by Michelinie & Dwyer + Rodier

<+> Demolitia is in town! She bears a striking resemblance to the original Bloodsport and her aim is the same: to kill people, unless Superman can save the day. Unfortunately, writer David Michelinie seems a little burnt out of late, with a distinct lack of direction. But penciller Kieron Dwyer provides his finest work to date, with distinct influences of his step-father, John Byrne. (SiB) **6**

Adventures of Superman 531

by Kesel & Immonen + Marzan

<+-> Superman's trial is over: the sentence of death has been withdrawn following a bitter feud between his jury and a little help from Superman's colleagues. A nicely written epilogue to an entertaining saga with some very fine artwork from Stuart Immonen. (SiB) **8**

Aquaman 17

by David & Calafiore + Palmiotti

<-> It's a pity Peter David can't decide what to do with this book. The covert government operations, bizarre alien races and secret spaceships only go to prove he's been watching too much *X-Files*. The hoary *you killed the king, now you're my king* climax could be seen approaching from miles away. Not a bad book, just muddled. (RH) **5**

<+> Beginning of a quest to unite the lost cities of Atlantis results in Aquaman acquiring a new, and unwanted, mate. But it's still the humorous dialogue that makes the series work so well. (PCP) **8**

Batman 527

by Moench & Jones + Beatty

<+> The district attorney persona of Two-Face rises to the surface, seeking vengeance on an untried murderer. Excellent crime thriller, lifted by the moody and bizarre visuals. (PCP) **9**

Batman & Robin Adventures 3

by Dini & Templeton + Burchett

<+-> Although not yet as enjoyable as its predecessor, this still stakes a solid claim as most enjoyable Bat-book, despite featuring out-of-continuity cartoon adventures. An enjoyably unsentimental Christmas tale with Ty Templeton drawing a mercifully un-Jim Carrey-like Riddler. (RH) **7**

Batman: Dark Allegiances

by Chaykin

An *Elseworlds* story set in the Thirties, with Bruce Wayne as a self-made millionaire and the stars of his rogues gallery as fascist plotters. Howard Chaykin puts the emphasis on fun with his portrayal of the Batman in an inventive, fast-paced tale. (RHo) **8**

Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 79

by Millar & Yeowell + Giordano

<+> Touching one-parter in which the last present given to Bruce Wayne by his parents — a train — is stolen by a thief. Bruce (as Batman) sets out not really to catch the criminal, just to retrieve his last memento of his parents. Nicely written, well-paced storyline with solid artwork from Steve Yeowell. (SiB) **8**

<+-> A lightweight Christmas tale with more than a few cornball touches such as: Batman turning his back on a crime because the man responsible is a single parent, and Bruce Wayne getting all wound up about the theft of his toy train. Capra in Gotham? Nice idea, but it doesn't really work. Neither does Dick Giordano's traditional inking over Steve Yeowell's pencils. (RH) **5**

<+> A break-in at Wayne Manor results in a personal loss for the Batman. A Christmas story that could have been a classic series entry, had it concluded one page sooner. (PCP) **6**

Black Canary/ Oracle 1

by Dixon & Frank + Dell

Black Canary is financially challenged: She hasn't any money, so she ends up working for Oracle — the former Batgirl, crippled by the Joker. Canary's mission is to get close to multi-billionaire Nick Devine and find out why an eco-terrorist group has its sights set on him. A well thought-out yarn with gorgeous pencil work from Gary Frank. (SiB) **9**

An international mover and shaker is targeted for justice by two of DC's most popular and under-used heroines. Double-sized one-shot hits the mark in every respect and augers well for an ongoing series — but only if this creative team can stay together. Smart new outfit for Canary, but why does everyone want her out of the fishnets? (PCP) **9**

Black Lightning 13

by DeVries & Newell + various

<-> Batman guests in this dull series finale that was doomed from the start, thanks to its one-dimensional leading player and stereotyped setting. (PCP) **3**

Books of Magic 21

by Ney Rieber & Gross; Vertigo

<+++> A wonderful issue featuring a bit of very strange girl talk. Daniel spouts Shakespeare after seeing Hamlet; and Tim turns himself into a cat, only to spend the entire issue arguing with his 'cat' nature. I know none of this makes sense if you don't read the book, so what are you waiting for? (IRS) **9**

Catwoman 29

by Dixon & Balent + Smith

<+> Catwoman teams up with a group of highly professional thieves to steal the details of an illegal shipment of stolen money. A well-paced actioner from Chuck Dixon, enhanced by the incomparable Jim Balent. (SiB) **8**

DC vs Marvel 1

by Marz & Jurgens + Castellini

If you believe the hyperbole, this limited series is what all the true superhero fans have been waiting for.

Arguably this may be so, but that doesn't mean that the ensuing effort should be as half-baked as this. I have no problems with Ron Marz or Dan Jurgens as creators, but are they really appropriate for such a high profile project? For such a high cover price, a more substantial plot wouldn't have gone amiss. (ST) **4**

The team-up of the century and I couldn't resist it. As forced as any team-up in history: poor plot, sketchy characterisation, decent art, *some* nice touches — a frisson of excitement from seeing Batman vs Bullseye — but, overall, a major opportunity missed. (IRS) **5**

Anybody remember Marvel's **Contest of Champions**? Ron Marz obviously does as he's re-used the plot almost totally for this ho-hum meeting of universes that, more than anything else this year, proves just how limited superhero comics can be. If all you're going to do when these characters get together is have a load of punch-ups, why bother? Sorry, I'm getting old. I'm sure I'd have loved this as a 12 year old, as I did **Contest of Champions**. (RH) **2**

Uninspiringly anti-climatic, this should be the big one, the clash of the colossi. But the merging of two universes was explored far better in **Ultraforce/Aveugers**. The only rewarding conflict is Batman and Bullseye, and that is fleeting. The art styles are equally unimpressive. It would appear that the companies are relying too strongly on the book selling on its title alone. (RJJ) **2**

Much hyped mega-event which has various DC and Marvel heroes plucked from one reality to the other (spinning from the recent **Green Lantern/Silver Surfer** one-shot). Despite the familiar plot — an industry standard ever since the JLA/JSA dimension hopping team-up 35+ years ago — it's competently packaged and certain to sell by the ton. (PCP) **8**

The big twos' long-awaited meeting gets off to a promising start as the two respective universes begin to merge. The results — including Batman vs Bullseye, Peter Parker meeting Clark Kent — whet the appetite for more. Solid writing and art with Claudio Castellini's visuals being quite impressive. (MB) **7**

The DC and Marvel Universes begin to merge for the meeting of the century. The sheer glee with which I opened and read this comic was phenomenal, and I wasn't disappointed. Various interesting meetings are forthcoming and perfect parallels (Spectre and Living Tribunal) are drawn. The art is suitably controlled and overall, this is a milestone which should, must, and will be read. (DM) **10**

Detective Comics 693

by Dixon & Johnson + Hodgkins

<- -> With art that owes a little too much to Image — thanks to new inker James Hodgkins, coupled with the dopiest new villain in ages (Allergent — don't ask!) this is a weaker issue than we've come to expect from **Detective**. It isn't helped at all by Poison Ivy only being in costume on the cover. (RH) **4**

The Eaters

by Milligan & Ormston; Vertigo

A family of cannibals travel across America in a winnebago. *Addams Family*-style comic capers with a deliciously dark aftertaste; served up with a flourish by both writer and artist. (RHo) **8**

An amusingly dark satire on American society, food and political correctness. Dean Ormston's art suits perfectly, managing to be both comical, dark and even subtly sexy in places, although the Tarantino-style splatter ending is a bit of a letdown. Another in the *Vertigo Voices* series which follows the tradition of being three months late hitting the shops. (RH) **9**

Egypt 5

by Milligan & Corona; Vertigo

After being tortured by then panicking the High Priest, Vincent finds himself taken on an unusual journey with goddesses as his tour guides. He appears to be quite important to them. The art is still bordering on the poor, but Pete Milligan's script is good stuff. (PaW) **8**

<-> Despite an extremely strong script, Vincent Me's travels in ancient Egypt suffer slightly from having a plot that jumps all over the place and time. Perhaps a complete reading will be more successful in making sense of it all when the series is finished. (RH) **7**

Extreme Justice 13

by Washington & Morgan + Branch

<-> Captain Atom uncovers some disturbing truths — if that is what they are — about his origins. Mediocre script and art. A dull series which deserves cancellation.(PCP) **2**

Firebrand 1

by Augustyn & Velluto

A cop gets blown to Heaven and back and is rebuilt by a mega-rich benefactor. The addition of a super-suit augments new powers. Nice visuals can't disguise concept antecedents and limited series potential. (PCP) **5**

Flash 110

by Waid & Jimenez + Marzan

<+-> The excellent *Dead Heat* storyline speeds ahead (oops) as Wally West and Jesse Quick set out to stop the evil plans of Savitar, who is banking on stealing the powers from all the speedsters. Mark Waid writes his socks off with an all-action epic that's not boring for a minute. Oscar Jimenez's zippy pencilling makes it all the more fun! (SiB) **9**

<+> Speeding past the half-way point and the *Dead Heat* storyline still shows no signs of putting on the brakes. The Flash and Jesse Quick confront Savitar at his citadel in the Balken Mountains. While Flash learns firsthand the scope of Savitar's speed powers, Jesse takes on his newest recruit. Things may look grim, but the cavalry is just about to rocket around the corner. Well-paced scripting with superlative visuals. (ST) **8**

<+> Flash and Jesse take the fight to Savitar himself as this excellent crossover continues to delight. Writer Mark Waid is, of course, a master of plot and characterisation, while the art team's improvement continues. (MB) **8**

Green Arrow 105

by Dixon & Damaggio + Campanella

<+> Connor Hawke — with a little help from Robin — arrives in Gotham City seeking to rescue his mother from his evil gun-running stepdad. Routine actioner holds interest. (PCP) **7**

Green Lantern 70

by Marz & Pelletier + Tanghal

<+> Donna Troy walks in on her boyfriend Kyle — the current Green Lantern — as he's painting a naked female model! A rather heated debate ensues, seeming to result in the termination of their relationship. Just when Kyle thought things couldn't get any worse a Berserker attacks him. Intelligent storyline and dialogue with some smooth and refined Paul Pelletier visuals.(SiB) **9**

Guy Gardner Warrior 39

by Smith & Campos + Davis + Napolitano

<-+> Gardner gets an unexpected Christmas gift from The Spectre and Phantom Stranger. Once again numerous DC characters congregate at the superhero watering hole. Excellent series entry from a title that frustratingly and inexplicably never quite hits its potential. (PCP) **7**

Hellblazer 97

by Jenkins & Phillips; Vertigo

<+++> Constantine has his fortune told by a shepherd in a forest clearing. The issue consists of short stories signifying the character's past, present and possible future. Paul Jenkins is really beginning to make this book his own now, helped enormously by the constantly improving Sean Phillips. (IRS) **9**

The Horrorist 1

by Delano & Lloyd; Vertigo

Murder, mystery and suspense, with glorious sepia renderings by David Lloyd. And yet, who it's about is hard to tell. If you don't already know John Constantine, you won't learn much about him here (you're only told his *name* three-quarters of the way through). What you do learn doesn't encourage you to find out more. Wonderful though the artwork is, this expensive title is for convinced fans only. (AW) **6**

The Horrorist 2

by Delano & Lloyd; Vertigo

Angel was rescued as a young girl from Africa and died three years ago. But now she travels, and she takes the world's horrors to the people she meets. John Constantine needs to find her, and follows the trail of horror in her path. When they meet, will she unlock his frozen soul? The art is very good but sometimes a little thin, and the story leaves you with bruises. (PaW) **8**

<-> Constantine and his dream/nightmare woman meet in a small town besieged by disaster. The only minor weakness of this story is the form of the resolution, but then *no* ending could have met the demands of the build-up to this encounter. A bleak and uncompromisingly grim, but incredibly powerful piece of work. (IRS) **9**

<+-> Constantine's pursuit of the Horrorist culminates in a purgative bender of catastrophic proportions. Jamie Delano returns to the form of his early **Hellblazer** days with this chilling two-parter: In which a ghoulish Constantine is confronted with the horrors of human behaviour, igniting a spark of humanity in his icy soul. David Lloyd's illustrations are superb. (RHo) **9**

<+-> This has certainly been Jamie Delano's best work in a long time and maybe that's down to his reunion with John Con. The Horrorist herself produces moments of genuine fear which are accentuated by David Lloyd's moody art-job. As usual, Delano occasionally strays a little too far into pseudo-poetry with his narrative, but mostly, this is an enjoyably frightening read. (RH) **8**

Icon 33

by Bright w/Tanghal; Milestone

<+++> Best friends Raquel and Darnice, who have both had a stint as Rocket, find themselves arguing over who should have the Rocket identity permanently. It's not until they have to unite to defeat Flambe that they reach a compromise. Excellent story and art from Mark Bright, with the usual maturity and characterisation throughout. (SiB) **9**

Impulse 10

by Waid & Ramos + Faucher

<+> Bart's lost his speed, and his friends at school are finding it odd that their pal isn't as quick off the mark as usual. While all this is going on, Bart's Uncle Max is lying in a hospital bed staring death in the face, the result of a bitter conflict with Savitar who plans to hijack everyone's super-speed. Less quirky than usual, but it's still highly entertaining storywise, and Humberto Ramos's artwork is delightful. (SiB) **8**

<+-> Crossovers often get in the way of a book's main business, changing the style and interrupting subplots. Fortunately *Dead Heat* hasn't infected **Impulse** in such a way. Here we get all the familiar ingredients of Bart being a jerk at school (albeit powerless for a change) and exchanging well-scripted dialogue with Max Mercury. (RH) **8**

<+> Bart finds life without super-speed too much for him, while Max lies grievously injured in hospital. Just another brilliant issue. (MB) **9**

Impulse 11

by Waid & Ramos + Faucher

<+> As our speedy heroes confront Savitar's ninjas, the speed force finally beckons Johnny Quick. Full

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of action, humour and emotion, this is almost as good as the classic *The Return of Barry Allen*. You do know how good the writing and art are on this title, don't you? (MB) 9

Industrial Gothic 2

by McKeever; Vertigo

<-> I'm not usually a fan of Ted McKeever's writing, although I do find his artwork extremely effective. Here, though, the two combine quite well and he's succeeded in creating an endearing pair in Pencil and Nickel. Also, the new character of Rose should satisfy those who complain that comics only ever portray sexy women who are super-model thin! (RH) 7

The Invisibles 17

by Morrison & Jimenez + Stokes; Vertigo

<+> The spotlight falls on Gideon Stargrave, courtesy of King Mob being tortured in the most brutal of manners. He finds his mind drifting to his past lives — one of which was Gideon Stargrave! Grant Morrison writes an intricate, well-woven tale, but the dazzling artwork of Phil Jimenez and John Stokes outshines everything else. (SiB) 8

<+> The interrogation of King Mob begins and it's time for us to question exactly who he is, as Grant Morrison reintroduces one of his earliest creations: Gideon Stargrave, leading us into *Entropy in the UK*. Excellent multi-layered writing with lovely Bryan Talbot-like art. (IRS) 9

<+-> A glimpse into King Mob's fantastical former lives, as he sits helpless in Sir Miles' torture chamber. A potent brew of retro SF, high-jinks and grim interrogatory threat. Masterfully written as ever by Grant Morrison, with the bonus of this issue's highly talented pair of guest artists. (RHo) 8

<++> For anyone who abandoned **The Invisibles** before issue ten, now's the chance to get back in. *Entropy in the UK* is fast-paced, bad-taste fun with a much stronger emphasis on the individual characters and some delicious George Perez-inspired artwork. And Gideon Stargrave, whether he exists or not, is a god! (RH) 9

<+> Torture techniques described and displayed in graphic detail combine with the Sixties/Seventies tales of Gideon Stargrave, as King Mob's mind becomes ever more surreal. Spiralling subplots with a delicious art style that is both fully detailed, and yet iconic, sum up a perfect Vertigo comic. (RJJ) 10

The Joker: Devil's Advocate

by Dixon & Nolan + Hanna

Sentenced to die for a crime he did not commit, the Joker finds an unlikely ally as his nemesis sets out to prove his innocence. An expensive hardcover which is a joy from cover to cover with the Joker in top psychotic form — confirming his position as the best comics' villain ever created. (PCP) 9

Legion of Superheroes 76

by Peyer + McCraw & Moder + Boyd

<+-> Bouncing Boy — minus his bounce — returns and casts his fresh eyes over the new Legion. He is disappointed at the lack of pride and unity that he witnesses, echoing perhaps, many an old fan's thoughts about the current group. It's a good read though, wrapped in a nice Alan Davis cover. (SF) 7

<+-> More pre-*Zero Hour* characters are reintroduced as Bouncing Boy turns up as an architect; Star Boy joins; and Kinetix encounters the White Witch. The issue provides a breather after recent events, and sets up the next few storylines. More great work from one of DC's more underrated titles. (GSD) 8

Legionnaires 33

by Peyer + McCraw & Moy + Carani

<+> A group of Legionnaires confront a being who attacked the Time Institute and has now moved offworld. Meanwhile, Kinetix discovers the source of the White Witch's power: the Emerald Eye. Well written with great art — why aren't the Legion books among DC's best sellers? (GSD) 8

Power of Shazam! 11

by Ordway & Krause + Manley

<+> Blaze has kidnapped Shazam — the wizard behind the Marvel family's super-powers — and it's up to Mary Marvel to find him. Meanwhile, Cap's Uncle Dudley receives some Shazam powers to help the cause, and funny as this is, it cannot compete with the impeccable Tawky Tawny, who's just *so* groovy! Writer Jerry Ordway injects fun into comics with this project, and the art team provide an uncluttered, exciting treat. (SiB) 8

<+-> The Marvels are out in force as seven heroes take on the seven deadly enemies of man. To make up the numbers, Bulletman, Uncle Dudley and Tawky Tawny join the fray. Very much an opener for next month's showdown, it's nevertheless a fun read to the usual high standard. (SF) 7

Preacher 10

by Ennis & Dillon; Vertigo

<-> More of Jessie's past is explored, from the murder of his best friend and the escape from Angelville, to his meeting, then leaving Tulip. And I must say the final panel this issue is a complete Tory MP. Another good issue, just slightly less gripping than last time. (PaW) 8

<++> If this book gets any better it will explode — probably in a shower of blood and gore. We come up to date with Jesse's story as he finally reveals the true extent of his love for Tulip, just in time for the most shocking, brutal climax ever seen in a comic. Pure genius as always. (IRS) 10

<---> Jesse's monstrous childhood revisited. It's a familiar formula by now: horror and humour in equally disgusting doses. But Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon remain the masters of it, imbuing their work with a power which makes this book essential reading. (RHo) 9

Robin 25

by Dixon & Wieringo + Woch

<+> It's not a problem for Robin this time, but for Tim Drake, as one of his high school friends adopts the gangland attitude of carrying a gun around school. Sadly Tim's efforts prove to be in vain as a shoot-out at the end results in tragic consequences. Emotions are running higher than ever in this excellent, well-written title, and the definitive Robin artist Mike Wieringo makes a welcome return. (SiB) 9

<-> A worthy attempt to cover the issue of guns in schools is spoilt somewhat by the inclusion of the new Green Arrow — surely one of the most one-dimensional characters this side of Image. And the tragedy is that he replaced one of the most fascinating superheroes: Oliver Queen. (RH) 5

Seekers — Into the Mystery 1

by DeMatteis & Barr; Vertigo

J. M. DeMatteis launches the first story arc in his new creator-owned series with this tale of a cynical, embittered Hollywood screenwriter who may have more to his life than he realises. Strong narration, honest dialogue and a lovely **Moonshadow** joke make for a very promising start. (IRS) 8

A burnt-out LA screenwriter rediscovers the magic of a childhood fantasy. A promising start to this new ongoing series which seems to be a return to **Moonshadow** territory. Well written as ever by J. M. DeMatteis, ably supported by Glen Barr's artwork — reminiscent of Kevin O'Neill. (RHo) 7

There's always been a fair amount of bandwagonism in comics, but the amount of new books currently being promoted as being like *X-Files* sniffs a little of desperation. If all it takes are elements of the supernatural or paranormal, then 95% of mainstream comics are like *X-Files*! Still, I have a lot of respect for J. M. DeMatteis and this opening chapter shows much promise for a character-driven mystery series. (RH) 7

A screenwriter begins the tale of his quest. The art is the usual scratchy Vertigo style but Glenn Barr has the feel to make it work. The fact that J. M. DeMatteis's script doesn't attract attention to itself is a good thing since it supports the story, rather than distracting the reader. This would be a good comic if it weren't for the appalling colouring which ruins it. (DG) 6

Shade 68

by Milligan & Case + Pennington; Vertigo

<+> We hit the final three issues of this book, with our hero deciding to leap around in time in order to put right everything that he's messed up to date. Another fine revision of the Changing Man and his supporting cast in a tale that one suspects will make more sense in three months' time. (IRS) 8

Sovereign Seven 7

by Claremont & Turner + Ivy

<++> Cruiser and Network traverse the skies above Crossroads, the hometown of the Sovereign Seven, as the rest of the team takes part in a parade. What makes this book shine is the way Chris Claremont allows his characters to interact with one another so superbly and effortlessly. That, and the beautiful artwork from Dwayne Turner which improves no end this month. (SiB) 8

The Spectre 37

by Ostrander & Mandrake

<+> Jim Corrigan's friend Nate Kane has been shot, and Corrigan vows to find out who was responsible. This quest takes him onto the Dream Plane and beyond... into the Iconic Plane where he meets Uncle Sam! A new direction for the title but as well written as ever, with some very powerful visuals from Tom Mandrake and the colourists. (SiB) 9

<+> John Ostrander's erudite script investigates America's masonic origins and the power of icons, symbols and Uncle Sam. Enthralling stuff with definitive art from Tom Mandrake. (MB) 8

The Spectre 38

by Ostrander & Mandrake

<+-> Professor Hazzard learns the history of the American Talisman, while Spectre is forced to doubt his own validity. A highly intelligent and entertaining storyline. (MB) 8

Starman 15

by Robinson & Harris + Von Grawbadger

<++> Part four of *Sins of the Child* focuses on the kidnapping of Mikaal Tomas and Soloman Grundy, and on Grundy's savage beating at the hands of Mist's henchmen. Once again the title character is barely present, but the strength of both writing and art ensures that he's not missed. (IRS) 9

<+-> Ah, someone else who's watched *Reservoir Dogs* too often. The lengthy torture of Blue Starman comes spliced with amusing arguments, sudden violence and pop-cultural references. But, damn it, it's also bloody good fun! And shucks, we've all done it (ripped off Tarantino that is, not tortured... er, well maybe not). (RH) 8

<+> *Sins of the Child* continues, as the focus shifts onto Mikaal the alien and Soloman Grundy. They are being held hostage by the Mist's henchmen, one of whom has a grudge against Mikaal. Still DC's best book. (GSD) 9

<+-> Mikaal and Grundy are kidnapped and tortured by the Mist's henchmen, while Jack is still nowhere to be seen. Another fine issue — as well drawn as ever with an excellent script. (MB) 9

Starman 16

by Robinson & Harris + Von Grawbadger

<-> A slightly disappointing end to an excellent five-parter. Jack finds himself at the Mist's mercy — and she lets him go, promising to do it all again soon. That aside, still miles ahead of most mainstream fare. (MB) 7

Superman 108

by Jurgens & Frenz + Rubinstein

<+-> Superman has saved the Tribunal's planet from the clutches of the Cyborg, and his reward? His execution has been brought forward! And while everybody thinks the Kryptonian has been killed in an explosion, the tragic truth is that his new pal Mope has taken his place in Heaven. A moving tale from writer Dan Jurgens, and some solid superhero art from penciller Ron Frenz. (SiB) 8

Vamps Collection

by Lee & Simpson; Vertigo

Collected from the earlier mini-series: a contemporary tale of five female vampires killing their male leader and escaping. The writing is mostly non-surprising, with the usual vampire myths and a few kinks of its own. The art is nice, but sometimes let down by sloppy colouring. (PaW) 7

IMAGE COMICS

Astro City 5

by Busiek & Anderson + Ross

<+> A lonely old man is revealed as the vanguard of an alien invasion. The invasion itself is brought about by the hypocrisy and shallowness of the human race and one hero in particular. Kurt Busiek has created a great book — all superhuman life is here. (IRS) 9

<+> An alien spy is maddened and endeared in equal measures by the quirks of humanity, as exemplified by the self-centred hero, Crackerjack. Kurt Busiek continues to enchant with this tale of superheroics told from the man (or rather, the alien) in the street's perspective. Alex Ross's superbly vivid cover rounds off an excellent package. (RHo) 9

Gen 13 #6

by Choi & Lee + Campbell + Williams

<+> The Gen-sters head out on the town for an evening. While Grunge winds up drunk and sick, Sarah Rainmaker changes her sexual preferences and winds up in bed with a man — a most interesting plot development that is unheard of in mainstream titles. Frostbite makes his debut this issue and Jim Lee returns to pencil a stunningly produced issue. (SiB) 9

<-> The team is in Italy and there's a surprise for Bobby. The pencils are in Jim Lee's usual tight, sharp style, but J. Scott Campbell seems to give the characters more life. Brandon Choi delves interestingly into the characters, especially Rainmaker's sexuality. (DM) 8

Glory 7

by Duffy & Deodato

<+> Mike Deodato seems to be using this book solely to draw endless poses of near-naked females. But to be fair, the artwork has improved greatly since last issue. However, Deodato is still not back to his former 'glory' yet! Storywise, Glory meets up with her ex-lover Superpatriot, who isn't the guy he used to be. A so-so story with so-so art, from creators who can do much better. (SiB) 6

Glory and Friends Christmas Special 1

by various creators

Anthology of Christmas stories involving Glory, Bloodpool, Knightmare and Riptide in individual and unconnected episodes. Dull and uninspired nonsense. (PCP) 2

Groo 12

by Aragones w/Evanier

<+> The great Pipil Khan has decreed to his soldiers that Groo must die. But it's easier said than done. Groo bungles his way through the ensuing fight with his usual lack of prowess — and still wins. Sadly, it's the final issue. (SiB) 9

<+-> And so Groo quietly slips off into the sunset with a tale that features the mad dictator Pipil Khan getting all wound up when someone names their town after the dumbo barbarian. This book will be missed! Come back soon, Sergio Aragones and Mark Evanier. (RH) 9

<+-> This is how Groo ends: Not with a bang, but with the same good old jokes. Groo's persecution by an army involved in war leads to diplomatic disaster, death and misery to all who pass by — while Groo and Rufferto remain unscathed, again! Always funny, always detailed, we are promised more soon. (RJJ) 8

Skrull Kill Krew 5

by Morrison + Millar & Yeowell + Ivy

<+-> The final issue offers no surprises, as the Krew follows the established pattern of: Big fight — kill loads of Skrulls — bicker a bit among themselves. Next time how about a plot, guys? (RH) 5

Supreme 0

by Stephenson & Nauck + Rapmund

Kid Supreme ponders the question as to whether he's really Supreme or just a younger incarnation... or even something completely different. Then, right on cue, the original Supreme reappears and... that's about it really. It's an unoriginal storyline, with forced dialogue and artwork to cringe at. (SiB) 3

Supreme 33

by Stephenson & Bennett + Rapmund

<+> "Will the real Supreme please stand up?" A whole host of Supreme wannabes and Kid Supremes find themselves turned into women, while the real Supreme ends up on a planet he's told is Earth. But his instincts tell him differently. Average yarn, but the return of penciller Joe Bennett is welcomed. (SiB) 6

WildC.A.T.S 25

Moore & various creators

<+> From the start, Alan Moore knows which buttons to press, filling the book with in-jokes, clever asides, and the best Irish accent outside of Garth Ennis' head, and stompingly good action. It's the attention to detail that make this book outstanding and Travis Charest's grasp on design is breathtaking. (RJJ) 10

MARVEL COMICS

Akira 37

by Otomo; Epic

<+> Whoops, this hasn't finished yet. The 'light' tells Kaneda about the psychic children trying to choose the course of human evolution. When he escapes, the city is in ruins and Akira and Tetsuo have gone. In addition is a 'tribute' by Jo Duffy and Mark Texteira set when Tetsuo realised his powers. (PaW) 9

Amazing Spider-Man 408

by DeFalco & Bagley + Mahlstedt

<-> Spidey continues to battle Mysterio and finds himself facing Armada as well — a new villain who shares Mysterio's desire to kill the our hero. Writer Tom DeFalco is coasting here by depending on fight scenes too much, while artist Mark Bagley displays an ignorance of human anatomy. (SiB) 5

Archangel 1

by Milligan & Manco

A real departure for Marvel, particularly as far as its X-Men line of comics go. This is a breath of fresh air. Although Pete Milligan's tale is not his best work, *Phantom Wings* is a surreal and different kind of story for the Archangel character. To set this book even further apart from standard X-titles, Marvel has opted for black and white art content — this is where the book really shines! Leonardo (**Hellstorm**) Manco's visuals are breathtaking. It's a shame that many won't buy this because it isn't in colour. (ST) 8

Graphic black and white art does little to pull this bland story from its X-Men links. The angst of Archangel is too familiar and has been overdone, as he is captured by a psychotic lassie. Saved from mediocrity by the last line, this territory has been well mapped and more should have been expected of the writer. (RJJ) 4

Askani's Son 1

by Lobdell + Loeb & Ha + Pepoy

A classic art style displays emotions and actions with solidity. The speckled shading is reminiscent of a woodcutting style, which ironically, gives a historical look to this futuristic story. The young Cable deals with the birthright of destiny and those that seek to use him, but it just seems to be going through the motions. (RJJ) 5

Avengers 394

by Harras + Raab & Deodato + Palmer

<+> The Avengers begin a vigil over the Wasp, mortally wounded by Tony Stark, as Crystal and Quicksilver try to locate their missing daughter. Then a member of the Kang Dynasty attacks the team and the Wasp emerges from her cocoon... totally changed. Non-stop issue with some rich colouring and excellent artwork from Mike Deodato and Tom Palmer. (SiB) 8

<+-> The adult Luna rescues Moonraker from the clutches of Kang and Mantis, but is followed to the Avengers mansion by Neut. A good story again marred by scratchy inking. (GSD) 7

<- -> Amidst a welter of nonsensical goings-on, Janet Pym becomes a hybrid life form — and no one bats an eyelid! Decent art, but an incredibly dull script. This once promising storyline has really gone off the rails now. (MB) 5

Avengers Timeslide 1

by Kavanagh & Ross + Cruz + various

The Avengers, clearly miffed with Tony Stark's murderous tendencies, time-jump back a few years and snatch a much younger Tony Stark in an attempt to set things straight. That's basically it... oh, did I mention the extremely poor artwork, run-of-the-mill script and atrocious colouring? No? How about the extortionate cover price? Catch my drift? (SiB) 2

A team of Avengers use the door in the basement to travel into the past. Their mission? Obtain the aid of the young Tony Stark in saving his older self. Unfortunately, they were followed... A great story with some cameo appearances, but one has to ask: Why such a high profile project had so many pencillers? (GSD) 8

The Avengers, unable to defeat Stark and Kang, travel back in time to enlist Stark's younger self. This renders Iron Man's Vietnam origin chronologically impossible and is a painfully bad attempt at retroactive continuity — no way is Stark currently 29 years old! The art's pretty average too. (MB) 4

Cable 28

by Loeb & Wilfred

<+> The Sugar Man decides to cut his losses and run, setting off a nuclear meltdown to destroy any evidence of himself. Secrets of the Genoshan mutate process are revealed, as is the existence of Nate Grey and the AOA timeline. Definitely the best story to appear in this title. It's a shame that Jeph Loeb has gone as, on this title at least, he is doing some good work. (GSD) 9

Captain America 448

by Waid & Garney + Rodier

<+-> Captain America is a prisoner of the Cosmic Cube, a device which the Red Skull believes will provide him with a means to remove Steve Rogers from his life forever.

However, as Cap relives his life's past events, the Skull hasn't reckoned on his enemy's determination and a battle ensues. Writer Mark Waid provides surprise after surprise in an action-packed and superbly illustrated story. (SiB) 9

<+> Trapped inside the Cosmic Cube, in a world he definitely made, Cap comes to a few conclusions about the hero he is. Mark Waid provides sterling work, making you care about a character that could so easily be dismissed. Ron Garney covers most of Marvel's art styles to lovely effect — like any of this matters now! (IRS) 8

<+> In an invented past, courtesy of the Red Skull's control over the Cosmic Cube, Steve Rogers pursues his original goal: the destruction of Hitler. Mark Waid has achieved much in his short run with this rather jaded character, fashioning a highly enjoyable superhero romp which doesn't take itself too seriously. His best issue so far. (RHo) 8

<++> Can our hero correct his life's failures and complete the mission he was created for? *American Dream* is one of the best issues of *any* superhero title I've read in ages, thanks to great art and a phenomenal character-driven script from Mark Waid — a true classic! (MB) 10

Captain America 449

by Waid & Garney + Rodier + various

<-> Mark Waid was born to write this character, but he's let down here by some very inconsistent visuals. The Zodiac seal off Manhattan and the harried Captain America turns to Thor for help. Enjoy Waid's superb characterisation while you can as it may not last much longer. (MB) 7

Daredevil 349

by DeMatteis + Nord & Williamson

<-> A reborn Stick guides Matt Murdock on a quest to recapture his soul. A competent lead-in to next issue's fireworks, continuing the theme of fractured identity which has dominated J. M. DeMatteis's short run on this book. Enthusiasm is somewhat dampened by the news that he is to leave the title, which is a shame. (RHo) 7

<+> Cary Nord — for my money the best penciller to work on **Daredevil** since John Romita Jnr. — together with J. M. DeMatteis is handling the title in an intelligent manner and definitely holding my interest. Unfortunately, Ron Wagner is due to return to art duties for the big #350 next month. (JG) 8

Doom 2099 AD #38

by Ellis & Pugh + Koblish

<+> Doom leaves America, but not before taking vicious revenge on Herod. This quality creative team again deliver the goods as the engrossing, multi-themed *One Nation Under Doom* storyline concludes. Just one question: Who *was* that Captain America? (MB) 8

Excalibur 94

by Ellis & Jones + Simmons

<- -> What to do if you're short on ideas: Drop current continuity and base your story on a possible future for your characters where the world is nasty and evil and so are the superheroes. Oops, I've described writer Warren Ellis's **Excalibur** #94, only saved by the elegant yet simple pencil work of departing penciller Casey Jones. Oh, dear me! (SiB) 3

<+++> Warren Ellis uses Brian Braddock's trip through time to give us an English version of Chris Claremont and John Byrne's classic view of Marvel's future history, dropping hints of upcoming plotlines as he does. As well-written and character-driven as ever, slightly let down by half-hearted art. (IRS) 7

<+-> A disturbing look into Excalibur's future which ties the team into the classic *Days of Future Past* Claremont/Byrne story. This should have been longer as writer Warren Ellis barely scratches the surface here. Otherwise, enjoyable enough, with good art. (MB) 7

Fantastic Four 408

by DeFalco & Ryan + Bulanadi

<-> The original FF team are re-united as they take on Hyperstorm, who was responsible for the recent disappearances of Dr Doom and Reed Richards. If you're after action-packed fight scenes, you're in for a treat. If you want development and characterisation, look elsewhere — there's none here. Paul Ryan's artwork saves the book from total disgrace. (SiB) 5

Fantastic Four 2099 #1

by Kesel & Leonardi + Williamson

After a battle with Annihilus, the FF find themselves in New York 2099 and things are mighty different... not to mention difficult when the foursome gets split up in this unfamiliar world. Good start storywise, although coincidences such as new costumes mysteriously appearing on the team's backs aren't welcome. The artwork's second-to-none, making it a shame the art team leaves after the first issue. (SiB) 7

Fantastic Four 2099 #2

by Kesel & Buscema + Williamson

<+> It seems everyone's after our heroes who, as well as trying to cope with their new world, are dumbstruck on learning of Doom's presidency. Karl Kesel writes FF stories far better than they've been written for years in their regular title, while all-time great John Buscema's pencils don't disappoint. (MB) 7

Generation X 12

by DeZago + Lobdell & Grummett + various

<+> The team goes shopping in Boston, as Chamber and Paige face up to the fact that they want to be more than friends — but can't. Nice low-on-action issue allowing for some good character development. Also, penciller Tom Grummett's return is welcomed. (SiB) 8

<+-> Emplate returns with henchmen in tow and captures the entire Generation X team, except for his sister, M. The story is improving, but is not up to its earlier standard. Chris Bachalo's art is still sorely

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missed. (GSD) 6

<+-> Emplate captures the entire team and claims M is his sister (I really can't see any family likeness!). This is fair at best, the sooner Scott Lobdell returns to scripting the better. Although the art is Tom Grummett's best for a while. (GSD) 6

Incredible Hulk 438

by David & Medina + Riggs

<+-> The Hulk has survived the grenade explosion... just. But, as wife Betty begins a bedside vigil for her husband, he restores himself to his former green glory — albeit a different shade of green and a more fragile, careless personality. Peter David takes the book in yet another exciting direction, backed up ably by Angel Medina's refreshingly different art style. (SiB) 9

<+> Bruce Banner, with the mentality of the Hulk, leaps onto an exploding grenade thinking he's impervious to harm. Boy, what a mess! Although he recovers, something is obviously very wrong, the repercussions of which could be disastrous for anyone in his way. The new artist, Angel Medina, has settled in nicely, giving the ideal finishing touch to Peter David's polished storyline. (ST) 9

<+-> Bruce has shrapnel in his brain and no one can help except his old foe, The Leader. Also, Bruce seems to have changed his temperament again — are we about to see The Maestro? Another fine issue from all concerned, although penciller Angel Medina needs to work on Hulk's physical proportions. (MB) 8

Inner Demons (Tales of the Marvels)

by Nicieza & Wakelin

A tramp finds redemption through his friendship with the amnesiac Sub-Mariner, in a story woven around the latter's classic reintroduction in **Fantastic Four** #4. Neither script nor art disappoint, but this still somehow lacks the magic of previous **Tales of the Marvels**. (MB) 6

Iron Man 324

by Abnett + Kavanagh & Calafiore + Bright + Palmiotti

<+-> The Avengers come to the all-too-obvious conclusion that Tony Stark is not the man they once knew. And Stark, not content with killing the odd Avenger here and there, sets out to kill the entire team. Cracking script, well-paced storyline and some excellent artwork, despite two pencillers having once again to pitch in. (SiB) 8

Iron Man 325

by Abnett + Kavanagh & Calafiore + Cheung + various

<+> Stark confronts his younger self as the Avengers storm the Arctic bunker. A good Dan Abnett script, but the idea of replacing Stark with his own younger version is just a plain bad 'un. Some excellent visuals here with Jim Calafiore's work being outstanding. (MB) 7

The Phoenix Resurrection: Genesis

by various creators; Malibu Ultraverse

The book is full of sound and fury, showing the mythical history, preparing for a cataclysmic battle with that most famous of adversaries, the Phoenix. The X-Men fight Ultraforce, only to realise they are on the same side and again, Phoenix possesses Prime. But, put off by his cellulite, Phoenix leaves for fresher fields. (RJJ) 4

The Phoenix Resurrection: Revelations

by various creators; Malibu Ultraverse

An annoying comic that plunges from fight to fight with very little thought. This new Phoenix story ignores the themes associated with past Phoenix tales and goes straight for the action-adventure vein. The combination of Marvel and Malibu heroes in a fight against this old enemy lacks the power of the original. (RJJ) 2

Prime 3

by Jones + Strazewski & Royle + Moy; Malibu Ultraverse

<+> Kevin sets about trying to reclaim his Prime identity while Phade fantasises over the real Prime. Turbocharge shares the same thoughts, with neither able to explain why the Prime they're working with has changed so much lately (it's actually because he's an imposter). Hard to believe these are the same writers who created the first **Prime** series as this storyline is pretty dire, although artist John Royle is impressive. (SiB) 5

Professor X and the X-Men 4

by Nicieza & Duursema + Delperdang

<+-> Professor Xavier goes in search of two new mutants to join his cause, namely Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch. But when they decline his offer, Magneto seizes his opportunity to recruit them to his Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. Entertaining tale from the X-Men's past, retold by a solid creative team with rapidly improving artwork. (SiB) 7

Punisher 3

by Ostrander & Lyle + Ivy

<+-> Frank Castle, now working for the Geraci crime family, finds himself facing Hachiman — a super-powered agent with a rival crime gang. It takes all of Frank's skill and determination to win the day. Meanwhile, a second Punisher continues his killing spree. Writer John Ostrander has really clicked here with some refreshingly new storylines, aided by powerful Tom Lyle artwork. (SiB) 8

Punisher 4

by Ostrander & Lyle + Ivy + Nichols

<+> The rogue Punisher is revealed to be Jigsaw, who is out to kill Frank Castle. But Frank already has his hands full, dealing with Daredevil and the rebellion within the Geraci crime family. Gripping stuff from writer John Ostrander, although Tom Lyle's pencils look a little rushed this month. (SiB) 7

Punisher Kills the Marvel Universe

by Ennis & Braithwaite + various

This tragicomedy sees the Punisher waging war on superheroes taking each and every one out. The art adds levels of realism, and despite annoying continuity errors and some unanswered questions — did Punisher really blow away eight year old Katie Power in his quest? — this book is the perfect antidote to the majority of Marvel's fare. (RJJ) 9

Frank Castle's family die during a super-powered battle so he vows vengeance on all super-types. A sharp Garth Ennis script is laden with black humour and irony, while Dougie Braithwaite's pencils are clean and attractive. A thoroughly enjoyable romp. (MB) 9

Sabretooth Special

by Nicieza & Frank + Holdredge

Having escaped from the X-Mansion, Sabretooth is running loose in the sewers with a team of X-Men chasing after him. At times the book reads like a *let's take it in turns to fight Sabretooth* yarn, but it *is* hugely entertaining and well written, and a welcome return for the vibrant artwork of Britain's Gary Frank. (SiB) 8

Creed has escaped from the mansion and is headed for New York with the X-Men in pursuit. They are going to take him down once and for all, or at least until December's issue of **X-Factor** anyway! A great story and art, spoiled by the very temporary nature of Sabretooth's 'death'. (GSD) 7

The Savage Hulk

by various creators; graphic novel

A clever combination of short Hulk tales brought together into one long graphic novel, integrated into current continuity. The framing sequences by Peter David and Mike McKone provide the backbone of the story as Bruce Banner is in court to answer charges brought against him by over a thousand people. All have been injured or suffered property damage as a result of his actions over the years. The various witnesses provide testaments to his good and bad points, hence the short stories by telling various tales of the Hulk's destructive side. Of particular note is Dave Gibbons' strip; and the superb artwork of Humberto Ramos, who illustrates Scott Lobdell's excellent yarn about the Hulk's battles with the Avengers. Despite the fine array of creators, the framing pages are the finest. Slick artwork and some very fine scripting allow the various segments to integrate seamlessly. Finally a project worthy of that dreaded prestige format! (SiB) 8

The Hulk is taken to court by the various bystanders that his exploits have affected. This provides lots of big name creators with a chance to pay homage to the old 'Hulk Smash' approach. Although sixteen writers and artists contribute, it's all of a high standard, with Dave Gibbons and Matt Wagner's segments being particularly impressive. (MB) 8

Sensational Spider-Man 1

by Jurgens w/Janson

<-> Spider-Man investigates a mysterious new television station that appears to hypnotise its viewers. But it's all a ploy of Mysterio's to attack Spidey while he's in a trance. Way too many convenient coincidences are involved here, and since when has Mysterio used the word 'groovy'? Artwork, however, is excellent. (SiB) 6

Spectacular Spider-Man 230

by DeZago & Buscema + Palmiotti

<+> When a member of an eco-terrorist group becomes seriously contaminated by toxic waste, he wages a war against the company responsible in his new mutated guise of DK. Spider-Man tries to soothe things, but whose side should he take? Rather well written with some suitably atmospheric artwork and a trace of the witty banter that Spidey was once famous for. (SiB) 8

Spider-Man Holiday Special

by Greenberg & Maguire + various

A Spider-Man anthology title. The high point being the Kevin Maguire illustrated tale about Spidey helping a suicide victim come to terms with her life. Its writer — Glenn Greenberg — does a better job than most, and Maguire's quirky pencils are excellent. Unfortunately, the other stories range from mediocre to poor. (SiB) 6

Storm 1

by Ellis & Dodson + Story

The story starts out with Cable appearing to discover Storm's dead body. Then we jump back a few hours as Storm explains her need to visit the Morlock tunnels. That's where her problems begin. Warren Ellis pulls out all the stops with this one, while artist Terry Dodson's work (looking more like Adam Hughes by the day) is his finest to date. (SiB) 8

Terminator 2: Cybernetic Dawn 2

by Abnett & Whigham + Snider; Malibu Media

<-> Sarah and John Connor are once again on the run from the

Terminator threat. But this time Skynet has sent three machines back in time to kill them! The art is a letdown after the first issue, looking patchy and rushed. But Dan Abnett's excellent scripting makes this read like a sequel to the films themselves. (SiB) **8**

Terminator 2: Nuclear Twilight 2

by Paniccia & Erskine; Malibu Media

<+> This book captures the true horror of the Terminators and the hopeless plight of those who try to stop them. Gary Erskine's art is on top form — combining his newly-discovered slick style with the gritty dark and destructive penmanship for which he is better known. (RJJ) **8**

Thor 494

by Ellis & Deodato

<+-> British cop Curzon grabs himself a 'Thor Detector' and sets off to find what he expects to be Thor's lifeless body. Instead, he happens upon a very much alive Thunder God and the Enchantress in battle with Price, a being who is destroying the World-Ash tree. Superb finale to an excellent four-parter. (SiB) **10**

<+-> I never thought I'd read another issue of **Thor** again, but Warren Ellis has done such a good job of breathing life into this most decrepit of old superheroes. Look, Marvel, if you want to hand your characters over to hot creators to shake them up and pull in new readers, forget the Image crew — let Warren Ellis run riot! You won't regret it. (RH) **8**

<+-> Thor discovers just who is accelerating Ragnarok and puts an end to the nasty scheme — too late it seems, however, to save Asgard. A fine end to a delightful four-parter, with both script and art well up to par. Given the news of **Thor**'s cancellation, this would make a pretty good swan-song for the title. (MB) **8**

Ultraforce 2

by Ellis & Butler + Branch; Malibu Ultraverse

<-+> The team now have an 'Avengers' feel to them, with two rather unique characters running the HQ while the team is out on missions. This makes the storyline — in which Ultraforce tracks down an Ultra-bomber — more easily accessible and less strained. Unfortunately, Warren Ellis seems totally lost with the characters, and the stiff and disjointed artwork only makes things worse. (SiB) **5**

<-> The government-backed Ultraforce team takes on the rogue Ultra from last issue and guess what? He isn't the baddie. Decent art, fairly well scripted, but superheroics by numbers. Warren Ellis seems to be simply coasting on this book, we all know he's capable of so much more. (IRS) **6**

Uncanny X-Men 329

by Lobdell + Loeb & Madureira + Townsend

<+-> Archangel has a heart-to-heart with Wolverine about his current mental attitude... or at least he tries, until being interrupted by the Steam Ninja! Dr Strange guest-stars and Psylocke's life is hanging in the balance. Usual fine script supported by fantastic artwork from Joe Madureira who improves each issue. (SiB) **9**

<-> Logan and Archangel bump into Dr Strange while seeking mystic help for the gravely injured Psylocke. Not quite as exciting as the last excellent issue, but the brilliant art team just gets better and better. When did this title last look so good? (MB) **7**

Untold Tales of Spider-Man 6

by Busiek & Olliffe + Vey

<+-> Spidey teams up with the Human Torch to solve clues left by the Wizard. Of more interest, however, is the ongoing early character development (ie: Peter Parker at college, in the Daily Bugle, etc). A good balance of action and characterisation with superb Pat Olliffe artwork. (SiB) **9**

<+> Spidey teams up with a reluctant Human Torch to foil the Wizard. This book tells new stories of Peter Parker's formative years and manages to recapture the spirit of the teenage superhero. Some fine work from Kurt Busiek and Pat Oliffe. (RHo) **7**

<+> So disillusioned with the regular Spidey books that I cancelled my standing orders for the whole lot earlier this year, I found at least one way I can keep in touch with my old hero. **Untold Tales** is densely plotted, intelligently scripted, and most of all fun, as perfectly demonstrated by this Spidey/Torch team-up. The sort of comic that reminds you why you got involved in the first place! (RH) **9**

Wolverine 98

by Hama & Bernardo + various

<- -> Logan wakes up in Madripoor where various heavies try to get even with him. Larry Hama is an excellent writer, but the current storyline has dragged on far too long. This issue, for example, seems a real filler with only so-so artwork. (MB) **5**

X-Force 57

by Loeb & Lima + various

<-> Boomer, devastated by inadvertently helping Sabretooth escape (and almost kill Psylocke),

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reinvents herself as Meltdown, complete with a trite new look. Jeph Loeb's script isn't nearly as good as usual, while the fill-in art is standard sub-Image fare. (MB) 5

X-Man 12

by Ostrander & Skroce + LaRosa

<+> Nate shows up on Muir Isle where Moira discovers that he's too powerful for his own health. John Ostrander was an inspired choice to write this title and already seems to have a real grip on Nate's character. The art is no disappointment either. (MB) 8

X-Men: Wrath of Apocalypse

by Lee + Portacio + Claremont & Portacio

A reprint collection of **X-Factor** 65-68, in which Cyclop's son, Nathan, is transported 2000 years into the future and subsequently grows up to be Cable. A good idea as the individual issues can be expensive. (GSD) 7

INDEPENDENTS

Armed and Dangerous 1

by Hall; Armada/Acclaim

Aimed at **Sin City** and **Stray Bullets** readers, art-wise as well as content-wise, this is nothing more than a crime pot-boiler without the aspirations of the aforementioned comics. Nonetheless, it does entertain as it tells of a young man following in his father's bloody footsteps into the world of gangsters. A brave step by the company, but many other comics have been here before with better results. (RJJ) 6

Avengelyne: Power 2

by Napton & Stinsman + Alquiza; Maximum Press

<-> Avengelyne decides to become a model and poses for some very revealing swimsuit photos. But she's attacked by demons, who present a great excuse for yet more 'action' poses from Avengelyne. The artwork borders on soft-porn and the story — I use the term lightly — could have been added after the book was drawn. (SiB) 3

Cerebus 201

by Sim & Gerhard; Aardvark Vanaheim

<-> Cerebus sits in a bar in drunken conversation with Mick Jagger, a 'generic' Beatle, Marty Feldman, Eddie Campbell's Deadface and Mrs Thatcher. Far lighter than recent issues, marred only by this reviewer not being able to understand a word of 'Ringo's' phonetic speech. But then I'm only *from* Liverpool, so what do I know? (IRS) 7

<+-> With guest appearances by Popeye, Mick Jagger, an ex-Beatle, Mrs Thatcher and, is that Bacchus? Dave Sim starts the final third of his masterwork with a return to comedy. It's welcome light relief after the intensity of *Minds* and could even be described, were Sim to ever employ a hype-machine, as a great jumping-on point. (RH) 9

Comics Interview 148: Manga & Anime!

Feature magazine; Fictioneer

Tezuka Studios in Japan invited choice American comic creators Will & Ann Eisner, Richard & Wendy Pini, and Stine Walsh & Brian Stelfreeze to visit them in Tokyo. They learn a bit about each other's industries and attitudes — pretty enlightening because they highlight how screwed up the American market is in comparison. Some interesting things crop up in the conversations — including a snippet about a manga giant in Japan wanting to buy Marvel Comics to break into the American market, but giving up because it was too small! If only... (PaW) 9

Faust 11

by Quinn & Vigil; Rebel Studios

M continues to try to bring about the end of the world, while his ex-mistress Claire forces a confrontation with John. The apocalyptic story allows plenty of sex and violence to be graphically portrayed and it does hang together well, but the art is too... well, muscular. (PaW) 6

Gold Digger 26

by Perry; Antarctic

<+> What happened to the meek and gentle Empress Lynn while lost in the Astral Rifts? Her foul temper is getting in the way of romance, she tells all to Gina. A welcome return of one of my favourite GD characters, and a funny issue to boot. (PaW) 9

Hate 21

by Bagge & Blanchard; Fantagraphics

<+-> Buddy Bradley begins to realise that he is being run by the three women in his life. Unfortunately, he's too apathetic to do anything about it. Peter Bagge's art is very stylised and works well in this context. I can't comment on the validity of the story as I've never been in that situation, but the scripting seems appropriate. (DG) 8

Hothead Paisan: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist 19

by DiMassa; Giant Ass Publishing

<+> Angry and as excitable as ever, Hothead finds love. And what a mellowing out it causes. She only shrieks at 90 decibels and a couple of pages even go by without one exclamation mark as Hothead deconstructs the comic page around her. Frightfully good fun. (RJJ) 8

Kiss & Tell 1

by Breen & Wertz; Kiss & Tell Comics

This anthology of short stories is as imaginative as it is absorbing. Drawing on life both faithfully and in an exaggerated manner, the writer-artist conflict is playfully used to advance the story and give insider knowledge to the motivations of both creators. (RJJ) 9

Maison Ikkoku 5 #2

by Takahashi; Viz

<+-> The celebrations get a little heavy for Yusako when the day comes for his grandmother to leave. Then, when Mr Ichinose loses his job and ends up drinking with Yusako, he tells how he met Mrs Ichinose — does a similar fate await Yusako? A good mix of comedy and pathos. (PaW) 8

Powers That Be 2

by Shooter + various creators; Broadway Comics

The subtle art style that follows Jim Shooter around is at home here. Featuring more super-powers in the real world: filled with cliches, stereotypes and just about all the mistakes most new superhero universes make. There is some charm, influenced by both *Grapes of Wrath* and Marvel's original *New Universe*, but little to sustain interest. (RJJ) 5

Previews Adult Supplement

Sales catalogue; Diamond

Oh dear, this is bad! I get this for the expanded descriptions and adverts for the adult mangas and animes. But there's plenty of weird stuff here too, advertised with really flaky looking art. Probably a good point that it's incredibly thin! (PaW) 1

Princess of Darkness 1

by Tanuma; Eros

Just when high school girl Maki is at a low, she becomes mistress of the protective demoness Elhazzard. The story is decent and the art is unusual but good. This is the first of Eros's mangas that I've seen, and, while it doesn't match up to Venus's releases, it's not bad. (PaW) 6

Ranma 1/2 4: #11

by Takahashi; Viz

<+> Ranma's situation gets worse when Akane shows up, refusing to believe the picture of (male) Ranma and Kadachi kissing is a fake! Not only does Ranma-chan have to humiliate herself with Kuno for the pictures, but at the end of it all has to suffer Akane's cookies! (PaW) 9

Ranma 1/2 5: #1

by Takahashi; Viz

<+-> Genma, Ranma's father, receives a challenge from Ukyo — the child he 'left behind'. When Ranma discovers Ukyo could be his illigimate brother, he can't resist taking the challenge. But there could be a shock in store... A somewhat predictable issue but still quite good. (PaW) 7

Shanda the Panda 12

by Curtis & Smith; Antarctic

<+> While other characters begin to cement their relationships, Shanda and Terri finally sleep together. In a back-up story, an Auschwitz survivor is seen reading Maus! The story and art are both well done, treating the lesbian subject matter with sensitivity. (PaW) 8

Shotgun Mary 1

by Mallette & Wight; Antarctic

Our heroine is tracking down a gang which killed a girl, leaving only her tortured spirit. The art is very good but sparse and very heavily computer coloured. The story is better than **Areala** but not by much. Not recommended, coming from a company which publishes so many better books. (PaW) 4

Silbuster 12

by Sahara; Antarctic

<-> Fermina attempts to escape but Mitsuha stops her and a fight ensues on the ground. But Fermina's contract is finished, and she refuses to kill. A return to fights rather than humour which is unwelcome, though the art's nice and well handled, and the translation is fluid. (PaW) 6

Solar, Man of the Atom 59

by Bedard & Lopresti + Giordano; Valiant

<+> Solar finally returns to see his beloved Gayle, only to find she has fallen for another man. As if that wasn't bad enough, he's then kidnapped by the Secret Service and winds up destroying the whole of Texas. One of the strongest issues of late, enhanced by good visuals from Aaron Lopresti. (SiB) 7

Strangers in Paradise 8

by Moore; Abstract Studios

<+> Mrs Parker finally forces Katchoo's hand by snatching Francine and David. Who is telling the truth? I'm sorry, I just can't do justice to this issue in a synopsis, so you'll have to trust me when I say this is bloody good. (PaW) 9

Stray Bullets 7

by Lapham; El Capitan

<+> Undeniably the best new comic of 1995, and proof positive that you should never judge an artist by the duff Valiant superhero he draws. Here's another beautifully paced story this time featuring a young girl with an abusive mother and a terminally ill father. Impressively manages to avoid all those US TV movie cliches that we wince at on *Casualty* these days. (RH) 10

Turok the Hunted 2

by Grell + Furman & Deodato + Couto; Valiant

<-> Turok tries to educate McBride — a white man searching for the mystic White Buffalo — in the ways of the wild. Surprisingly non-preachy, it does seem very

rushed storywise, although the powerful Deodato/Couto artwork and the lively colouring help compensate for this. (SiB) 7

Uncle Joe's Commie Book featuring Cutey Bunny

by Quagmire; Ripoff Magnecom

An extremely loose re-telling of the first meeting of the three wartime leaders. Very loose. The art needs work, and not even the numerous smutty jokes with bunny girls can save it. (PaW) 3

Vampire Miyu 1

by Narumi Kakinouchi; Antarctic

Miyu watches a girl troubled by dreams of her parents, wishing to give her eternal life. But instead he has to fight off an evil Shinma (a conventional vampire) to save her. It reads like a poem, and is a pretty nice premise with good if somewhat plain art. (PaW) 7

Vampire Miyu 2

by Narumi Kakinouchi; Antarctic

<+> Shou has caught many a young lady's eye, but Miyu is pained to learn he's an evil Shinma, responsible for the disappearances of several women from school, so she must kill him. This time the writing is straightforward, providing another nice little story. (PaW) 7

The X Files 10

by Petrucha & Adlard w/Kim; Topps

<+> Based on the ramblings of a delirious cannibal, Mulder believes he has stumbled upon a method of mind control, but Scully remains unconvinced. Writer Stefan Petrucha captures the characters from the TV series 100% accurately in this series. And artist Charles Adlard uses a simple yet effective style to enhance the mood of the series. (SiB) 8

X-Files Digest 1

by Petrucha & Adlard + Kim; Topps

A quick buzz of nostalgia for those who read Dez's old Marvel UK pocketbooks (remember them?) but mercifully the art in this mini comic isn't full-sized crammed to fit. However, there has to be a reason that Chris Carter has avoided Big Foot on the TV show so far — I suspect it may be too much of a joke for even Mulder to keep a half-straight face with, and this strangely comic-booky remake of *The Most Dangerous Game* (complete with duff *Short Circuit*-style killer robots) does little to restore Sasquatchian credibility. (RH) 6

Xander in the Lost Universe 4

by Fortier & Abrams + Beatty; Tekno

<-> Xander discovers a new world and new powers. Although Jae Lee's cover is violently jagged and impressive, the interior art is the opposite: flat and simplistic while the script is solid. (DM) 7

UK TITLES

Dare: the Final Volume

by Watson; Hawk Books

<+-> Volume 12 of the hardback *Dan Dare* reprint volumes draws the series to a close, having skipped the black and white **Eagle** episodes and moved smartly on to the Keith Watson return to glory. Representing the hall of fame of the definitive British SF hero, it is only slightly let down by being reprinted from the slightly muddy comic pages rather than the long-lost original artwork. Read it and weep for what might have been: this is what British comics once could achieve. (AW) 9

Kane 10

by Grist; Dancing Elephant

<+-> Paul Grist uses the novel tool of a reporter preparing an obituary for Oscar Darke in order to develop the background of the critically wounded crime lord. Meanwhile, the NEPD and Sgt Nelson (of the inaptly named Angel Squad) close in on the mysterious blonde who shot Darke. (JG) 8

Superman: Eradication!

by various creators; Titan Books/DC Comics

One of the Superman team's best story arcs (the origin of the Eradicator) given the the trade paperback treatment. With artwork by Ordway, Jurgens, Perez and Gammill and superb storytelling by Ordway, Jurgenms and Stern, at £8.99 this is a steal. (AW) 9

2000AD #973

by various creators; Fleetway

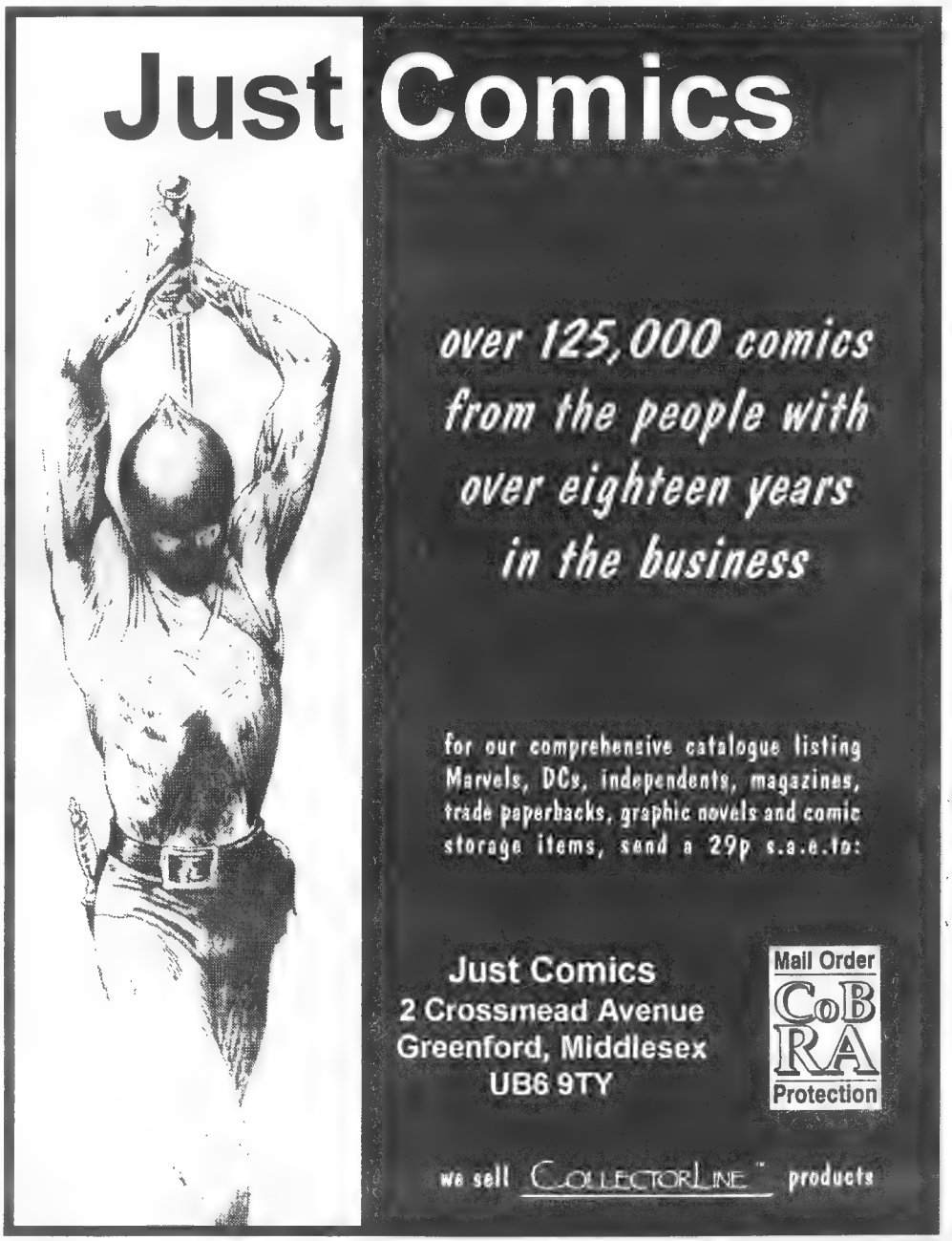
<+> Starting this week is *Flesh*, the concept being that food is almost non-existent in the future so humans travel back in time to obtain fresh meat from the dinosaur era. Written by Dan Abnett and Steve White, this excellent series features superb artwork from Gary Erskine and promises much. Elsewhere the Dredd tale *The Pit* continues to entertain, with Dredd co-creator Carlos Ezquerra on the art chores. *Vector 13* also provides interest with a tale of a man being attacked by darkness itself. Looking better, Tharg! (SiB) 8

SMALL PRESS

Cat Quarterly 4

from Annie Lawson; PO Box 910 London SE14 6DD; £1.50

A compilation of cartoons mostly based around alcohol. Funny, incisive dialogue with the sketchiest of art styles. This is the most commercial small press book I've read for ages. A free catalogue with every issue, too! (RJJ) 7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Good Morning, Good Morning,

Its a new year, a new approach, a new fountain pen, same old keyboard, and a fresh bombshell from Marvel into the Comic Business.

Marvel are re-writing the book again. The dust had hardly settled on Marvel's decision to hive off Captain America, Iron Man, The Avengers and The Fantastic Four to Jim Lee & Rob Liefeld, when they (Marvel) got rid of (fired) a huge number of staff. Many industry veterans have been pink slipped. What all this means for the business overall remains to be seen (I told you that '96 would be a roller coaster). I wonder if any other publishers will slavishly follow Marvel's lead (as they have done in the past).

At The Comics Warehouse we embrace these changes, we might not like all of them but they certainly keep us on our toes. You have to be fleet of foot to keep up these days. As always our ultimate aim is to keep our customers happy. Whatever changes come our way, we adapt and revise our procedures to give you the best service we possibly can.

Over the recent holiday period we didn't really get a lot of time off. We spent our time both catching up, and merging stock from the various sections of The Warehouse into one consolidated area. We are still in the process of stock checking and moving,and we're gradually getting right up-to-date.

This advertisement, with one minor exception (good old Batman) is totally devoted to the current giant of the industry, Marvel Comics.

With the stocks of Marvel & Malibu this month, we've basically thrown away our price guides to give you guys & girls a post holiday bonus and some of the cheapest prices around.

This is definitely the start of an interesting year. I think I'm really going to enjoy it. Come & join us for the ride of a lifetime. The Comics Warehouse is always committed to bring you the best. Wander around these pages & join our Comics Warehouse Express Train of Enjoyment for maximum readability at the most affordable prices.

The minimum order is just £5.00 for written orders and £10.00 for phone / faxed orders, there is also a flat fee of £3.00 for delivery in mainland UK - whatever the size of your order. See the last page of our advertisement for full ordering instructions and flat fee shipping details outside the UK.

Please Note: To improve efficiency of processing, picking and dispatch, we print the computer codes used for each title e.g. **N4561 "UNCANNY X-MEN": MB 68 'SLUDGE":** it is extremely helpful if you give the relevant computer code with your order, whether verbally, with telephone orders, or when listing written orders.

The prices in this advertisement are valid from publication until February 29th 1996 only (yes, its a leap year..). Please remember that we are currently back on track with all our advertisements and offers being completely self contained. Our recent three month catalogue programme extension to January 20th, is now complete and it'll be a little while before we get into another major roll out.

This advertisement therefore cannot be mixed or matched with any other advertisement or offer.

All prices given are per copy or per set except for pack prices which are for single packs as advertised.

Mature readers titles: Although this particular advertisement does not contain any Vertigo books (you'll have to wait till next month for them) it is only fair to let you know now of a small change in policy. With a recent editorial openness and relaxation of attitudes becoming evident in the mainstream Vertigo line (as well as many independents) we have revised our age requirement from 16 to 18. Therefore, in future, should you wish to order any mature titles, from "Preacher" to "Flowers on the Razor Wire" or "Heavy Metal" we must have an honest age statement that you are over eighteen years before we can ship any mature titles to you.

Doesn't really apply to this ad though 'cos Marvel have never really entered the mature readers arena.

So join us and start 1996 with a flourish, shake off the winter cold, get into the warmth of The Warehouse and enjoy a better (and cheaper) reading experience....

Look forward to hearing from you soon...

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Here we present some of the **original Malibu Comics** for your reading pleasure. Although we have plenty overall, some titles and numbers are in low stock mode. If you'd like to list a few alternates please feel free to do so.

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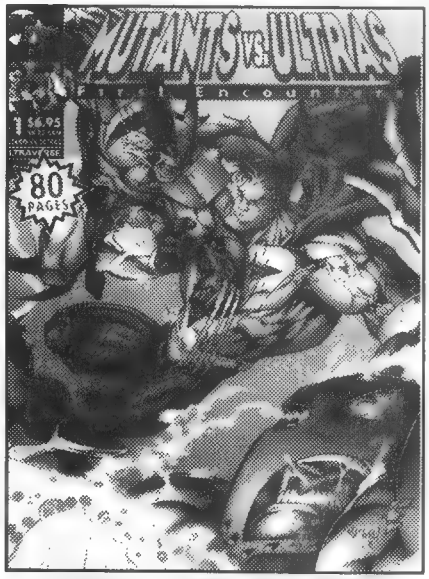
Once gone, that's it, have yourselves an excellent read whilst picking up a piece of history.

MB3: BATTLETECH FALL-OUT $2.95 Issue 4.....£0.50
MB8: BREAK-THRU (don't you love American spelling). The two part series that sent all our heroes (and heroines) to the moon in a mission to find out where the Ultra powers came from. 1,2.....£0.40 each
MB10: BRUCE LEE: $2.95. Malibu's take on the King of Kung Fu Movies, issues 3,4,5.....£0.60
MB11: CODENAME FIREARM: Mini series 1,4.....£0.50
MB12B: THE CURSE OF RUNE: $2.50 1,2,3.....£1.80
MB15: EDGE: Gil Kane's Bravura Work: 1,2,3 ....£0.40
MB16: DREAM TEAM: Marvel/Malibu Pin Up Book.....£1.50
MB20: EXILES: 4 issue mini series in which the team gets trashed. 2,3,4 .....£0.40
MB21: ELVEN: A cute nymphette gets powers similar to PRIME introductory issue Zero:.....£0.60
MB22: ELVEN continues in her own series 1,2.....£0.95
MB23: ELIMINATOR $2.95 1,3.....£0.60
MB24: ELIMINATOR Black Cover Edition 1 .....£0.90
MB25: FIREARM: The jewel of the Malibu Crown in my humble opinion. Written by James Robinson, these stories of the ex-company man turned private eye in the world of Ultras is excellent. James is current writing Starman for DC to rave notices. If you like James' style, approach and stories, then you owe it to yourself to check out Firearm. Truly excellent 1.....£1.25
2 to 6 inclusive £0.60
7-11,13,14.....£0.75
MB28: FREEX: Malibu's cross between the FF and the X-Men. A non-Team team of adolescents with Ultra powers, frightened and on the run from the authorities. The book developed very well leading into an excellent superhero style storyline.
2.....£1.25
3-16,18.....£0.40
MB28A: Giant Sized FREEX 1.....£0.50
MB34: HARDCASE: A Hollywood actor is in reality an Ultra-hero with a girlfriend who had her mind altered by one of the secretive Villainous organisations in the Malibuverse "Aladdin". 1-11,13-21,26.....£0.50
MB36: MIGHTY MAGNOR: Superhero pastiche. 1 .£0.50
MB39: LORD PUMPKIN (A Great Villain)
Issue Zero.....£1.25
MB40: MANTRA: Lukaz. 15,000 year old male warrior jumps into a new body each time he is killed. This incarnation is different however Lukaz finds himself in the body of Eden Blake a young & sexy divorced mother of two. His mentor the Archmage has arranged this incarnation much to Lukaz's concern. He not only has to fight supervillains and supernatural beings as the magical female Mantra, he also has to come to terms with periods, pmt, top heavy mammary glands and high heels. The heterosexual Lukaz also has males lusting after him. Concept: brilliant, execution: read it and see. 1-9, 12-16,19-24..£0.50
MB40G: Giant Sized MANTRA 1 .....£0.75
MB40S: MANTRA: Spear of Destiny 1,2.....£1.25
MB41: MORTAL KOMBAT: Battlewave 1,2,3,5.....£0.60
MB42: MORTAL KOMBAT: Blood & Thunder 1,3,4,5.....£0.60
MB42A: MORTAL KOMBAT Issue Zero.....£0.60
MB44: MORTAL KOMBAT: Goro, Prince of Pain 1,2,3.....£0.60
MB44A: MORTAL KOMBAT: Kitana & Mileena $2.95 1.....£1.50
MB46: MORTAL KOMBAT: US Special Forces 1,2 £0.60
MB48: NECROMANTRA: As time changes Mantra an evil Mantra is born 1,2,3.....£0.60
MB50: NIGHTMAN: Another of the original Malibu heroes. This book like Firearm became required reading due to the incredible mix of talents Steve Englehart & Kyle Hotz. 1-14 .....£0.50
19,20,22,23.....£0.75
MB50A: NIGHTMAN Annual 1 .....£1.25
MB57: PRIME. The best new superhero concept of the decade: A modern reworking of the old Captain Marvel Myth in which young Californian Kevin (13 years old) calls on the Power of Prime and turns into this super muscled Super-Hero. When Kevin gets tired though, the Prime body starts to break down and dissolve into green gloop (always at an inappropriate moment) 1,3-26. .. .... £0 50
MB60: PROTOTYPE (Malibus answer to Iron Man, but done better)
1-7, 9-17.....£0.40
MB60G: PROTOTYPE: Giant Size 1 ....£0.50
MB61: RIPFIRE: Issue Zero.....£0.50
MB65: RUNE: A true original from that exquisite pre-raphaelite stylist, Barry Windsor-Smith.
British to the core, but now permanently resident in the States, Barry started his US career at Marvel with fill in issues of titles like Nick Fury and the Uncanny X-Men in the sixties. Barry developed his individual style on the colour comic Conan the Barbarian (with writer Roy Thomas) and in the process vaulted to fame and into the record books.
The original concept of Rune as a space vampire was very writer driven, as were all the original Malibu concepts.
Barry's exquisite and detailed line fleshed out this feeder of souls and made a short lived comic series well worth reading. 1,2,3...£0.95
5-9..... ....£0 60
MB65A: Giant Sized RUNE 1.....£0.75
MB68: SLUDGE: A muck monster.A corrupt cop is killed and comes back as this huge twisted blue glob of slime and fecal matter. who can't even think straight. 1-6,8-12.....£0.60
MB68A: SLUDGE: Red Christmas £0.70
MB70: SOLITAIRE: 12 issue series. Our hero has a healing factor (a la Bloodshot from Valiant) and goes around in a blue ski suit blowing away the mob guys. The sub plot is who is he really. Mafia family or what? 1-8, 10-12 .....£0 40
MB70A: SOLITAIRE No 1. Black bagged edition...£0.50
MB75: THE SOLUTION: A supergroup of enhanced humans with wetware implants, mercenaries for hire who also need to get their leader's business back. Stolen from her by the Yakuza 1-14 .....£0.50
MB80: ULTRAVERSE ORIGINS: All you wanted to know 1.....£0.40
MB105: WARSTRIKE: A Malibu heavy hitter in the Image style of up and at 'em. 1-4,6,7 .....£0.40
MB105A: Giant size WARSTRIKE: 1 .....£0.50
MB110: ULTRAFORCE: The Ultra heroes get together a la The Avengers or The Justice League to combat menaces that only their combined powers can defeat. That's what the publishers would like us to believe anyway. I think that some of the villains they come up against are, to use Martin Riggs words, real pussies. Still the stories are entertaining and you get to see a lot of heroes strut their stuff. Issues Zero, plus 1,3,4,6,8,9.....£0.60
MB150: WRATH: 1-9..£0.40
MB151: Giant sized WRATH: 1.....£0.50
MB200: BREED: Jim Starlin's Bravura title, the story of a half breed hybrid, the apparently human offspring of a forced union between a human woman and a demon. 6 issue mini series 1,2,3,5,6 .....£0.50
MB201: BREED II: The Second six issue mini series continues the saga. 1-6. .. ..£0.50

Tel: 01621 850351 . 01621 859242 . Fax: 01621 850862 . Messages: 01621 859243



N600 MUTANTS VS ULTRAS

You've seen the ads in Comics over the last year and a half: Hulk vs Prime: Night Man vs Wolverine: Exiles vs X Men.

Premium editions for Mega Money. Did you send off for yours yet: were you tempted? but refused to fork over big dollar bills for a promo. Well, wise one, everything comes to he (and she) who waits. All three of these premium promotion Company Crossover stories have been gathered into one glossy 80 pager with a wrap around cover, reproductions of the original premium and Limited premium covers plus extra pin-ups. Three big stories in 80 pages.

USA $6.95 UK RRP £5.60

Warehouse price a mere £3.50

MB225: DREADSTAR: Continues the creator owned series started by Jim Starlin many years ago in Marvel's epic line. 3,4,6.....£0.40

MB290: The MAN CALLED A-X: Another Bravura title Marv Wolfman's creator owned character 0, 1-5£0.40

MB294: METAPHYSIQUE: (Bravura) 1,2.....£0.50

MB300: POWER & GLORY: 4 issue mini series. From the pencil, pen & brush of the inimitable Howard Chaykin comes this mini series of a hero manufactured for the TV screen who is really a wuss, and his agency keeper who does all the work. 1-4.....£0.60

MB301: THE NOCTURNALS: Daniel Brereton's tour de force in the creator owned Bravura line 1-5.....£0.75

MB391: STRIKE BACK: 1-3.....£0.50

Now I don't think that its a well known fact but before Malibu created and launched The Ultraverse they already had a range of books going for them. Some superhero, some licensed projects and some off the wall stuff As with many of the other Malibu lines stocks are limited, and in this section very limited. So get in there ladies & gentlemen, and have some inexpensive reading pleasure.

MC1: AIRMAN 1.....£0.40

MC4: DEAD CLOWN 1,2,3.....£0.40

MC5: DINOSAURS FOR HIRE 1,4-12.....£0.40

MC22: EX-MUTANTS 1-8,10-18.....£0.40

MC23: FERRET: 1,3,5-9.....£0.40

MC30: GRAVESTONE 3-7.....£0.40

MC38: MAN OF WAR 1,3,5-8.....£0.40

MC39: NECROSCOPE 3,4,5.....£0.40

MC40: NECROSCOPE BOOK 2: 1,2,3.....£0.40

MC41: PROJECT A-KO (Manga) 3.....£0.40

MC42: PROTECTORS: 1-9,11,13-19.....£0.40

MC42A: PROTECTORS HANDBOOK 1.....£0.40

MC43: RAVER: 1,2,3..£0.40

MC45: STAR SLAMMERS (Bravura) 1,2,3,4.....£0.40

MC50: STAR TREK: Deep Space Nine: 1,4-7,10-12, 14-24,27.....£0.50

MC53: STAR TREK: Deep Space Nine: Light Storm ($3.50) 1.....£1.25

MC57: STAR TREK: Deep Space Nine: The Maquis 1,2,3.....£0.75

MC65: TARZAN 1,2,3.£0.50

MC68: TARZAN: The Warrior 1,2,3,4,5..£0.40

MC70: TARZAN: The Beckoning 1-7.....£0.40

MC80: ULTRA MONTHLY (Newsletter about the Ultraverse Heroes) 1,2,3,4,5,6.....£0.05

Yep a mere fivepence each!

Commencing our Marvel range we have the eclectic, erudite, and esoteric EPIC Line When Heavy Metal proved a success in the seventies, Marvel, never a company to miss a commercial opportunity launched EPIC Magazine (I think I still have a copy somewhere of the original 16 page colour promo with the Frazetta cover). Epic was relatively successful and from it came the EPIC Comic Line.A mix of European reprints and original US material loosely connected by the creative thread of being "different". Although Marvel Epic Comics are no longer being produced (except AKIRA, but that's a whole othèr story) copies keep surfacing. So here is our limited supply EPIC offering.

MARVEL EPIC COMICS

(don't forget to check out GROO)

ME9: AIRTIGHT GARAGE £0.40

ME11: ALIEN LEGION Special.....£0.40

ME11A: ALIEN LEGION: Grimroo.....£0.40

ME12: ALIEN LEGION 1,3-12,14-18.....£0.30

ME12P: ALIEN LEGION: Tenants of Hell (Prestige) 1,2.....£0.60

ME12T: BOZ CHRONICLES 4,5,6.....£0.30

M13F: CAR WARRIORS 1-4.....£0.30

ME14: ATOM AGE (Prestige) 1,2,3.....£0.60-

ME14A: Clive Barker's BOOK OF THE DAMNED 2 1,2,4.....£0.40

ME15: CADILLACS & DINOSAURS 1,4,5.....£0.35

ME16: COYOTE: 1-13,15,16.....£0.30

ME20: DR ZERO 1,3,4,6-8.....£0.30

ME21: DRAGON LINES 1-4.....£0.30

ME25: DREADSTAR 3,4,5,7,9.....£0.30

ME26: DREADSTAR & COMPANY 1-4,6.....£0.30

ME28: CAPTAIN CONFEDERACY 1,2,4£0.30

ME35: ELFQUEST 17,18,28.....£0.30

ME41: ELSEWHERE PRINCE (Mobius) 1-6 .£0.40

ME42: EPIC (1992) $4.95 1,2,3,4.....£0.75

ME43: EPIC LITE.....£0.75

ME43B: FUED: 1-4.....£0.35

ME44: GROO: 39,40,42,43,45-52,55-66, 82,83,85-91,108-112, 119,120.....£0.40

ME44C: GROO: The Chronicles 2,3,6..... ...£1.95

ME44H: HARROWERS 1,2,3.....£0.30

ME45: HELLHOUND 1.....£0.30

ME45A: Clive Barker's HELLRAISER: 2,5,9-13, 15,17,19,20.....£0.60

ME45B: HELLRAISER: Dark Holiday Special (Clive Barker).....£0.60

ME45C: HELLRAISER: Nightbreed: Jihad 1,2..£0.60

ME45D: IDOL 1,2,3.....£0.30

ME46: INTERFACE 1-4,7,8.....£0.30

ME47: LANCE BARNES: Post Nuke Dick 1,2,4...£0.30

ME50: LAST AMERICAN 1--4.....£0.30

ME51: LAW DOG 1-5,9,10.....£0.30

ME52: LIGHT & DARKNESS WAR 2,6.....£0.30

ME55: MARSHALL LAW 6.....£0.30

ME58: MELTDOWN (Havok & Wolverine) Prestige 1,2,3,4.....£1.50

ME59: Ted McKeever's METROPOL: 1-4,7-10£0.30

ME59A: MIDNIGHT MEN 1-4.....£0.30

ME59B: MUTATIS: 1,2,3.....£0.40

ME60: NIGHTBREED (Clive again) 1-25.....£0.40

ME63: OFFCASTLES: 1-3.....£0.30

ME63A: ONYX OVERLOAD 1,4.....£0.30

ME64: ONE 1,2,3,4.....£0.30

ME64A: OPEN SPACE 2,3,4.....£0.30

ME65: PINHEAD (This Barker guy gets everywhere, he's really got a lock on the Horror genre) 1-6 .....£0.50

ME68: PLASTIC FORKS: 1-5.....£0.60

ME70: POWERLINE 2,8.....£0.30

ME72: PSYCHONAUTS 1,3.....£0.30

ME75: SACHS & VIOLENS 3.....£1.25

ME80: SAMURAI CAT 1.....£0.30

ME81: SHADOW MASTERS 1 .....£0.30

ME91: SLEEZE BROS: Some like it fresh 1 .....£0.30

ME92: SLEEZE BROTHERS: 5,6.....£0.30

ME94: SPYRE: 1-4.....£0.30

ME95: STALKERS 1,2,4-10,12.....£0.30

ME97A: ST GEORGE 1,2,3,6.....£0.30

ME98: STRAY TOASTERS 2,3,4.....£0.60

ME100: STEEL GRIP STARKEY 1-6.....£0.30

ME105: STRANGE COMBAT TALES 4.....£0.40

ME108: SWORDS OF THE SWASHBUCKLERS 1,2,3,6,10,12.....£0.30

ME109: TEMPORARY NATIVES 1.....£0.30

ME110A: TERRARISTS: 1,2.....£0.30

ME110C: TIMESPIRITS 1,2,3,4.....£0.40

ME111: THE TOMB OF DRACULA 1-4 .....£0.50

ME112: TOMORROW KNIGHTS 1-5.....£0.30

ME113: THE TRANSMUTATION OF IKE GARUDA 1.....£0.40

ME113A: THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS 1,2,4.....£0.40

ME114: UNTAMED: 1,2,3.....£0.30

ME115: VIDEO JACK 1-4.....£0.30

ME115A: VOID INDEGO 1,2.....£0.30

ME116: WAR MAN . 1,2.....£0.30

ME117: WEAVE WORLD (more of the ubiquitous Mr Barker). I haven't bothered listing Prestige or not Prestige as we've gone through this list. Let it come as a surprise. Weave World though *is* prestige 1,2,3.....£0.60

ME120: WILD CARDS 1-4.....£0.40

ME125: And to finish this current Epic Offering we come to the saga of **JACK CARDIGAN** fighting the drug runners in the future: **William Shatner's TEKWORLD** (yep, always get the name above the title) 4-8,10-19,22-24 .....£0.30

After partaking of our two hors d'oevre courses, here, is, not just the dish of the day, but the dish of the month.

MARVEL COMICS

We've merged our Marvel books into a single pick area and have decided that we still need the space: so here is a one month stock taking bonanza (you take the stock, we get the banana).

N10: THE ADVENTURES OF CYCLOPS & PHOENIX 1,3.....£0.75

N20: THE ADVENTURES OF THE THING 3,4.....£0.35

N30: THE AGE OF APOCALYPSE: The Chosen £1.25

N40: ALPHA FLIGHT: John Byrne's Canadian Supergroup: 2-50.....£0.60 52,54,56-66,69,71-86,88, 95,96,98,101-105,109-127, 129,130.....£0.40

N50: ALPHA FLIGHT ANNUAL 1,2 .....£0.60

N60: ALPHA FLIGHT Special (4 issue limited series) 1-4.....£0.40

N70: ALPHA FLIGHT Special 1992 co-starring fellow Canadian Wolverine £0.60

N90: AMAZING ADVENTURES Volume 2 reprints very early X-Men 14....£0.75

N100: AMAZING FANTASY 15: Marvel Milestone Edition reprint.....£0.75

N120: AMAZING SPIDERMAN 293,313,314,352,353,354, 379-386.....£0.75 388 giantsize.....£1.25 396.....£0.75 400.....£1.50 403,406.....£0.75

N130: AMAZING SPIDERMAN King size Annuals 15 Frank Miller/Punisher .....£2.50 16,23,25,26 .....£0.75

N150: AMAZING SPIDERMAN de luxe (enhanced issues) 388£1.95 400.....£2.95

N160: AMAZING SPIDERMAN: Friends & Enemies 1,4.....£0.40

N180: AMAZING SPIDERMAN: Milestone Edition reprints of 1,3,129,150.....£0.75

N200: THE AMAZING X-MEN: We've taken the Age of Apocalypse storyline books and incorporated them into our Alphabetical listings: here's the first - **The Amazing X-Men** 1-4...£1.50

N201: AMAZING X-MEN Issue 1 2nd edition.....£1.25

N220: ANNEX: 4 part mini 1-4.....£0.60

N240: ASTONISHING X-MEN 2-4.....£1.75

N241: ASTONISHING X-MEN No 1 (2nd ed).....£1.75

N260: AVENGERS (next to the JLA one of the longest running and best supergroups of all) 199,201-299,301-311, 313-333,335-359,368-373, 379-384,386-388..... .£0.50

N270: AVENGERS: King Size annual: 10 (introduces Rogue) £3.95 12,13,15,17-20,22,23..£0.75

N290: AVENGERS Giant double feature: Short lived experiment: regular story plus an extra giant man story at the back 380,381 .....£0.75

N300: AVENGERS LOG 1 ....£0.50

N310: AVENGERS Marvel Milestone reprint editions 1,16.....£0.75

N320: AVENGERS SOLO/ SPOTLIGHT : thousands of these went through our hands last summer, and here we are with more.. eminently readable at a mere 30p. 1-16,24-26,29-32,36 ...£0.30

N330: AVENGERS STRIKE FILE 1 .....£0.40

N331: AVENGERS THE TERMINATRIX OBJECTIVE 1,3,4.....£0.40

N340: AVENGERS/ULTRAFORCE $3.95 (one half of the progressive merging of the Ultraverse and the Marvel Universe. The other half of this saga is Ultraforce/Avengers) Avengers/Ultraforce is £1.95

N350: AVENGERS UNPLUGGED: The new 99cent line of Avengers Books 1.....£0.70

N360: AVENGERS-WEST COAST: for a while there, many years in fact, the Avengers were so popular (and populous) that they had two chapters. East Coast and West Coast. The original 1982 four issue introductory mini series you'll find under West Coast Avengers. Once Marvel launched a regular book though the word "Avengers" took the lead. Avengers - West Coast 4-64,68,72,73, 75-93,95-99.....£0.35

N370: AVENGERS WEST COAST Annuals 3-8 ...£0.40

N400: BEAVIS & BUTTHEAD: 7,8,10,12,13, 15-18,20.....£0.50

N410: BILL & TEDS EXCELLENT COMIC 1,8,12.....£0.30

N420: BISHOP: Mini series starring X-Man Bishop. 1,2,3.....£0.95

N440: BLACK CAT: Mini series (you know, the one who is in love with Spiderman) 1,3,4 .....£0.40

N450: BLACK GOLIATH: (Mini series) 1-5 ..... £0.75

N480: BLACK PANTHER (4 issue series) 1-4 .....£0.40

N490: BLACK WULF: 2-7 .....£0.30

N500: BLADE: The Vampire Hunter 1,3-6.....£0.40

N510: BLAZE: (as in Johnny Blaze of Ghost Rider fame) 1,3,5,7.....£0.40

N520: BLAZE: Legacy of Blood (mini series) 1-4£0.40

N550: CABLE 2-6,11-13,17-19,22 24..... .....£0.95

N560: CAGE (as in Luke Cage ex Hero for Hire) 1-17,19,20.....£0.30

N570: CAPTAIN AMERICA : 251-253 Byrne .....£0.50 336-399.....£0.35 400.....£0.50 401-424,429,431-434..£0.35

N571: CAPTAIN AMERICA Collectors Preview £0.95

N580: CAPTAIN AMERICA King Size Annual 10,11,12.....£0.75

N581: CAPTAIN AMERICA: Drug Wars..... .....£0.75

N600: CAPTAIN AMERICA: The Movie Special £0.60

N630: CAPTAIN MARVEL VOL 2 (The new incarnation, Captain Marvel's son) 1.....£1.25

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N660: CLANDESTINE: Alan Davis creation of a superpowered long lived family of scrappy individuals under threat from an unknown source. A great little book, cancelled eventually because of creative differences and the fact that Marvel couldn't keep it going after Alan left. 3-5,7-12.£0.75
N670: CLOAK & DAGGER 4 issue series 1,2,4.....£0.40
N710: CONAN CLASSICS: Barry Windsor Smith reprints of the famed Conan Comic that made Barry's name a household word in fan homes. 1-8,10,11 ..£0.50
N720: CONAN THE ADVENTURER: Recent colour comic outing of Conan. 2-7,9,11-14.....£0.60
N730: CONAN THE BARBARIAN 41,44-50£1.25
52,57-75.....£0.90
78-81,86,90-92.115,
121-125.....£0.40
N750: CONEHEADS
1-4.....£0.30
N760: COPS: The Job
1-4.....£0.30
N780; COSMIC POWERS UNLIMITED 1,2 .....£1.25
N840: DAREDEVIL:
260-263,265-274,
294,296-317.....£0.50
325.....£0.75
329,330,332-338.....£0.50
N850: DAREDEVIL ANNUAL 8,9,10.....£0.60
N860: DAREDEVIL: The Man Without Fear (Ground breaking mini series)
4,5.....£0.60
N880: DARKHAWK:
5-12,15-27,29,32-34,
37,39-41,43-46.....£0.30
N890: DARKHAWK Annual 1,3.....£0.40
N900: DARKMAN: Volume 2. 1-6.....£0.75
N901: DARK HOLD
1-6.....£0.50
N920: DEADLY FOES OF SPIDERMAN 1 .....£0.40
N930: DEAD POOL
3,4.....£0.75
N950: DEATHLOK: Luther Manning, dead human, part cyborg. His dead flesh rots away as he tries to come to terms with himself whilst fighting the bad guys in a weird future. Time travel is also involved.
1-26,28,32-34.....£0.40
N960: DEATHLOK
Annual 1.....£0.40
N1010: DESTROYER Vol 3 (As in DRAX) 1-4 .....£0.40

DISNEY SECTION

N1030: DISNEY AFTERNOON:
1,2,4,6,8,9.....£0.50
N1040: ALADDIN:
5,10.....£0.50
N1050: BEAUTY & THE BEAST 2,3,6,13.....£0.50
N1051: LITTLE MERMAID
3,6,11.....£0.50
N1060: THREE MUSKETEERS 1,2.....£0.50

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N1070 DOCTOR STRANGE (1980-1986) 45,49-63 .£0.50
N1090: DOCTOR STRANGE SORCERER SUPREME (current)
9,18-22,25-30,.33-42,
44-51,55,56,60,61,64-69,
72,73.....£0.50
77-80.....£0.95
N1120: DR STRANGE vs DRACULA
(g/s one shot).....£0.50
N1190: ELEKTRA: Root of Evil ($2.95) recent 4 issue mini series 1-4 .....£1.65
N1200: ELEKTRA SAGA
3,4.....£0.75
N1210: ELFQUEST (yes even Marvel published Wendy & Richard Pini's Elfquest at one stage)
1-21,23-31.....£0.30
N1220: ETERNALS: (Kirbys creations) 1-18.....£0.75
N1240: EXCALIBUR: started off as a good lighthearted superhero adventure book and gradually developed into an X-Men family title.
11-17.....£0.95
19-22.....£0.60
53,58-64,66-70,72,73,
75,77.....£0.50
84,87,88.....£0.95
N1242: EXCALIBUR XX CROSSING Special
Edition.....£1.20
N1270: FACTOR X 1 ..£1.95
N1271: FACTOR X No 1 (2nd edition).....£1.50
N1280: FALCON: 4 issue mini series 1-4 .....£0.35
N1290: FALLEN ANGELS
2,3,5.....£0.30
N1300: FANTASTIC FORCE: 1-4.....£0.50
N1310: FANTASTIC FOUR:
193-205,225-241,243,244,
246,247,250,258,259,261-
263,265-270,272.....£0.95
308-314,316-318,320-343,
354-359,361-368,372,373,
279-384.....£0.50
391-396,401-405.....£0.75
N1320: FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUALS 13-15,17-19
22,24,25,27.....£0.60
N1330: FANTASTIC FOUR: Atlantis Rising $3.95 2£1.95
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MOVERS & SHAKERS

The latest news, views and rumours in our ever-popular independent look at the hits, misses, prices, projects and people making comics news. Reported by the ever mysterious and controversial team of investigative diggers and delvers known to the world only as ITMA.

Rife with rumours

THERE have been some wild and wacky rumours circulating the globe since the plethora of press releases and announcements from Marvel and Image over and beyond Christmas. Many of the rumours have found their way to *Movers* via the Pros' Grapevine, usually a highly reliable source of information and insider speculation.

Many of the rumours centre on *Unfinished Business*, the newly announced umbrella name for the major Marvel events during 1996.

The popular Marvel "Zero Hour" rumour reappeared on the Internet and the feeling from the professional community is that the project is definitely back on.

But, it seems, the on-off-on event could cause some frantic stirrings in fandom, as it is believed that the new Marvel editor-in-chief, Bob Harras, has been seen patching up his differences with none other than Mr X-Men, Chris Claremont.

Sources have been told that Harras wants someone with both fan appeal and long experience of Marvel characters to write the Marvel "Zero Hour" and Claremont fits the bill perfectly.

Latest speculation is that the Marvel "Zero Hour" will be a story running through all the company's mainstream superhero titles over the spring and summer with two bookends written by Claremont.

Claremont back on the X-books?

The news of a possible return to Marvel for former **X-Men** supremo Claremont will undoubtedly set X-fans' tongues wagging and many hopes soaring.

One insider speculated that Claremont may be being groomed to replace Harras as the X-books group editor. But with Marvel seemingly in a state of flux at present, it is possible that by the end of the year Marvel Comics may just consist of the X-Men and the Spider-families.

This scenario is, however, unlikely as Bob Harras will inevitably be urged to launch new books and expand the line of Marvel comics. The company has a number of their comics characters in pre-production for major feature films, these include Blaze, Nick Fury, The Hulk, Ghost Rider and even Luke Cage.

A more likely event would be the revamping (again) and relaunching (again) of comics featuring these optioned characters through the top available creative talents. Marvel seems likely to have at least four "families" by the end of the year.

Alan Davis mystery

IT set one of our more investigative ITMites noses twitching when, in the space of three hours, he had two phone calls from comics artists both asking, cautiously, whether he had heard anything about Alan Davis.

On further investigation our ITMite could find little or nothing, with the exception of the proposed **X-Men/Clandestine** crossover. The strange thing about this potential non-starter story is that Chris Claremont's name was mentioned several times.

Davis is a favourite of Claremont's and the **Sovereign Seven** writer could well have asked for Davis to illustrate his part of the Marvel "Zero Hour".

Daredevil in Sin City

DESPITE the fact that just about everybody in the comics world believes that it is more likely for hell to freeze over than for Frank Miller to work for Marvel again, it might not be as weird as it sounds.

Part of Marvel's ethos for *Unfinished Business* is to put the most popular creators on titles which have seen better days. It is generally considered that Miller is/was the best Daredevil writer.

Whenever he works on the character, sales go through the roof (last year's **Man Without Fear** mini was a huge seller for Marvel).

Sales and revitalisation are what Marvel want and, oddly enough, so does Frank. Sales on **Sin City** have fallen during the slump and people close to Miller have suggested he has grown disappointed with the concept already.

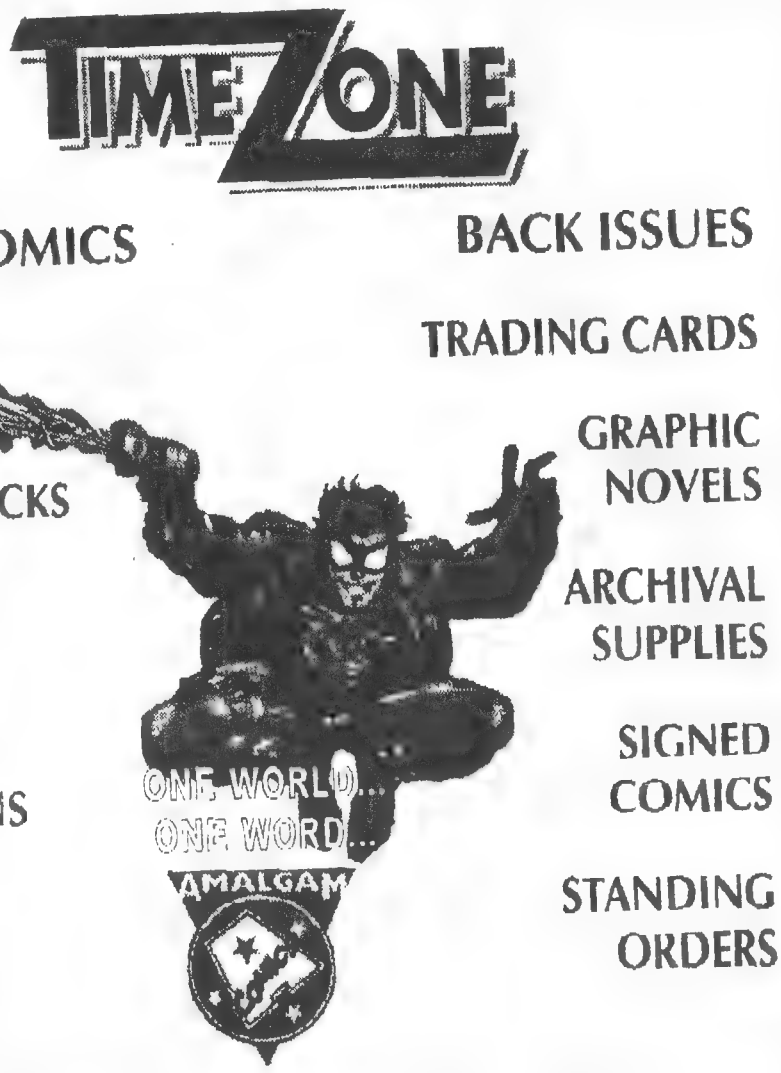
New Universe: a resurrection?

WITH the departure of **The Fantastic Four**, **Avengers**, **Captain America**, **Iron Man** and possibly **Thor** (there has been no official announcement as to the title's fate), Marvel will have a severely depleted universe of heroes.

Couple this with the imminent cancellation of **Doctor Strange**, **Ghost Rider**, **The Punisher**, the Ultraverse titles, possibly the entire 2099 group and several Marvel Universe titles — and what is left is hardly a Marvel Universe at all. Throw in the annexing of both the Spider-Man and X-family books and the entire Marvel Universe consists of **The Hulk**, **Daredevil** and **The Silver Surfer** and little else.

The proposed Marvel "Zero Hour" story could reintroduce characters developed for the ill-fated New Universe, including **Nightmask**, **DP7** and **Starbrand**.

Marvel may well integrate popular Ultraverse characters, such as



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Prime and Mantra as well as the almost-certain to be cancelled 2099 line into the new Marvel Universe.

However, just how they intend to re-write Marvel history without the use of such icons as the FF and Captain America will be interesting.

There is also a growing indication that The Hulk, originally wanted by Liefeld for his **Avengers** series, but the subject of an about-face by Marvel, is still going to appear in the Image-produced book. Marvel has agreed to allow Liefeld the use of the savage incarnation and whether this will be a separate entity or a version of the current Peter David Hulk is unclear.

Of the off-on again move, Peter David said recently, "Well, now ain't that a kick in the head. Apparently enough people complained, both from within and without, and Hulk isn't cancelled. How about that".

2099 walkout

KARL Kesel, Humberto Ramos, Tom Peyer and Peter David have all quit their 2099 books in response to the group editor Joey Cavalieri being fired. Ron Lim has apparently confirmed (although Marvel haven't) that both **X-Men 2099** and **Spidey 2099** have been cancelled, too.

Creative business

JIM LEE has announced who will be doing what on his share of the Marvel books being handed over to the Image creators on a work-for-hire basis. Lee will pencil and co-plot (with Brandon Choi) **The Fantastic Four** and Whilce Portacio draws the first six issues of the new **Iron Man**.

Rob Liefeld quickly followed Lee's announcement and said that he would pencil and co-plot **Captain America**. He is, however, keeping tight-lipped about who will produce **The Avengers**.

Super Spider price

THE NAMES Gerry Conway and Ross Andru hardly conjure up pictures of "hot" creators, yet these two industry veterans are responsible for three of the most expensive comics of the last 25 years: **Amazing Spider-Man** 129 (first Punisher) plus 149 and 150 — the original appearances of the Spider-clone.

Conway and Andru were arguably the reason for the turnabout in fortunes for the Wall-crawler. Spider-Man's sales had dropped considerably in the early Seventies and Conway, a relative comics newcomer, injected Spidey with a renewed vigour — he also killed off Gwen Stacy and Norman (Green Goblin I) Osborn. Ross Andru came on board after twenty successful years at DC drawing everything from **Superman** to the **Metal Men**.

Now it seems that this popular creative combo of the Seventies is about to have another back issue success with the very first Marvel and DC team-up, **Superman and Spider-Man,** which was written by Conway and drawn by Andru with inks by Dick Giordano.

It is twenty years since that over-sized comic book appeared and because of the Treasury Editions' unusual format it has been increasingly difficult to find genuine near-mint copies of it.

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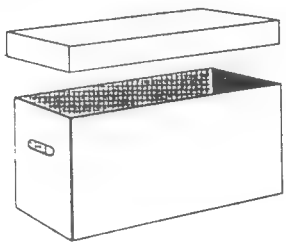

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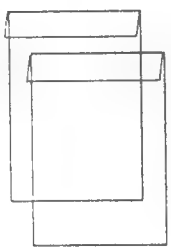

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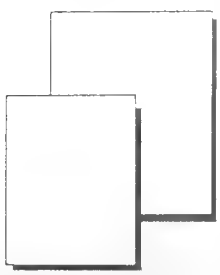

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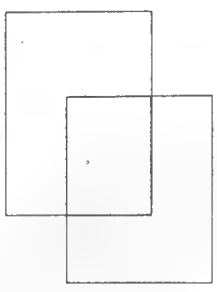

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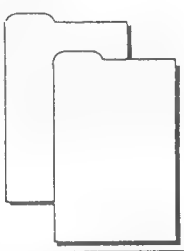

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Until the latest Marvel vs DC team-up, the price for the titanic meeting between Clark Kent and Peter Parker had hovered around £4 to £5, now it looks set to rocket in price with some US dealers asking as much as $40 for a VFN copy.

The rush for the title has not hit these shores yet but, as with hot US back issues, it won't be long before the price begins to shoot up.

Shi's a woman

SHI: The Way of the Warrior is mega-hot! It could quite possibly be the most sought after comic-book of the mid-Nineties.

Issue 1 of the title (print run 40,000) is selling from between £25 and £35, while issue 2 is generally no cheaper than £15.

This is quite an amazing fact seeing as Bill Tucci, the series creator, had to ship back nearly 2,000 copies of the title from the UK because of a printing defect — the gold embossing was missing. Apparently retailers were not happy with an untried title being delivered not as advertised and sent them back to the distributors.

Bill Tucci told **Comics International**, "Because of the defect, we took virtually all the copies that went into Britain back, now they're clamouring for them."

Tucci used the defect copies for his limited run of signed editions, a stroke of luck as the 2,000 run of signed copies sold for upwards of $40 each and every penny went into Tucci's pocket.

Considering the furore over the infamous **Spider-Man** 1 - Blue Lizard variant (see most early **Comics Internationals**), one would have thought that some forward thinking retailers would have held onto these editions. There are still approximately 300 copies of the recalled version still circulating and as this is not available in the US (except as a signed variant), these extreme rarities could well be worth double the asking price.

Shi team-up

IT IS likely that Bill Tucci's Shi will team-up with a number of characters this year. The first favourite being with Vampirella.

This seemed likely until Christmas when it was discovered that Vampirella publishers Harris Comics had parted company with Melaney Crawford-Chadwick, the person who had been setting up the project.

Dynamic and The Bill

THAMES Television was in Croydon at the beginning of January to film an episode of *The Bill* at John Newton's Dynamic comics shop.

John said, "It will be good to see a comic shop featured on mainstream TV, comic shops don't get nearly enough publicity."

It's a shame that the storyline couldn't reflect the positive side of the comics industry, though. Despite many on the show's production team being comic enthusiasts, the episode which will be screened around the beginning of February involves "Funny Goings On" in the back room of the comic shop, where the proprietor isn't just dealing in comics. Thanks, Thames, for making your viewers think that comic shops are seedy, drug-dealing dens of iniquity once more. Didn't the last *Bill* comic shop story also involve drug-dealing?

Nicieza knick-knacks

AN ebullient Fabian Nicieza seemed very pleased to have escaped the turmoil at the Marvel offices, when he spoke to one of our ITMites recently. Despite the fact that his **Captain Marvel** series has been cancelled, Fabian seemed pleased with his future plans. In a note, he said, "Lessee... Cap Marv is dead with #6 (which is funny, since #7 and #8, which I've already plotted, were my best issues so far).

"**22 Brides** in March, **JLA** in the summer... **The ^6**, which is an on-line comic for Byron Preiss Multimedia. I was offered and accepted **Marvels III**, "but who knows now if it'll happen? I'm discussing a possible **JSA** one-shot for DC. And, maybe that **Daily Bugle** Limited Series for Marvel". To which he ended sarcastically, "Yeah, right, sure..."

Redondo regondo

NESTOR Redondo, the artist who had one of the most difficult jobs in comics — having to follow Berni(e) Wrightson on the original **Swamp Thing** series, has died of a stroke on December 29. The Philippino artist made his name with DC in the early Seventies drawing **House of Mystery** and **Rima** (which explains why he had a hell of a name), but it wasn't until Wrightson and Wein left the critically-acclaimed muck monster that Redondo received the plaudits he deserved.

He commented once in a fanzine interview in 1978, "I was really frightened following Berni onto the book, but Julie Schwartz took me to one side and said 'just do your stuff'. It put me at ease but I wasn't sure. Then Berni phoned me and said that I was the best choice for the job. That, somehow, made it better."

High Caliber

CALIBER Comics are rarely included in price guides, quite an anomaly considering how popular many of their titles are.

Negative Burn is one of the most acclaimed anthology titles currently on the market. The title has featured many artists and writers who have gone onto greater things in the industry and has also included the work of many long-term industry stalwarts: People such as Alan Moore, Dave Sim, Brian Bolland and Frank Miller.

Prices on earlier issues of **Negative Burn** have been set by demand rather than a price guide, with each issue being appraised on its content and creators. Early numbers are not in high demand and can still be obtained in 50p bins at comic marts and shops, but later issues, ones featuring **AKA Goldfish** by Brian Michael Bendis, **Kilroy Is Here** by Joe Pruett, Alan Moore's **Songbook**, Bob Burden's **Flaming Carrot**, David Mack's **Kabuki** and Paul (**THB**) Pope's **The Visible Man** are selling for as much as £4 per issue, especially in the south of the country.

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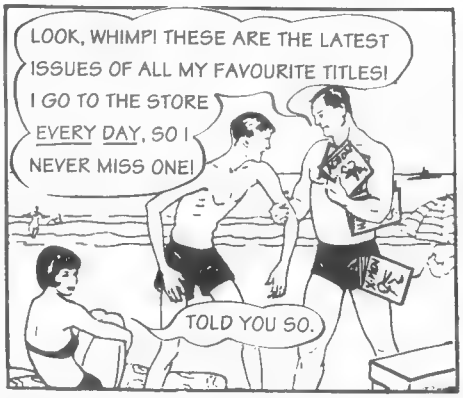

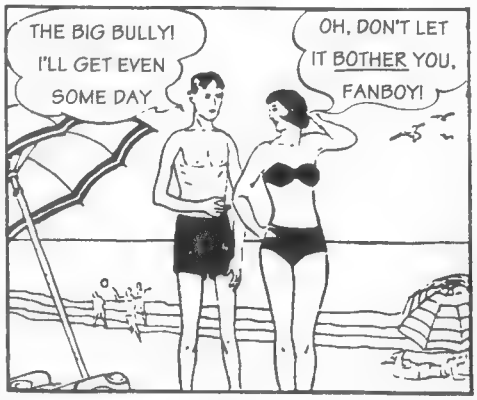

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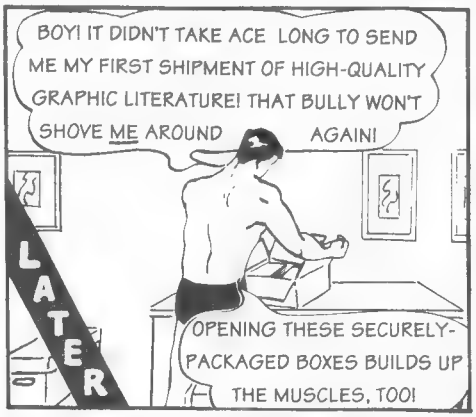
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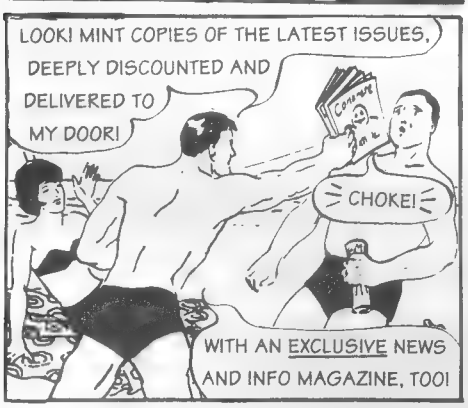
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Hugh Sheridan
Blackrock, Co. Dublin

COMICS International, which I started to collect three months ago, is quite frankly brilliant. Its cheap price, interesting articles and insider information make it the best trade magazine about.

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Also the reader input and feedback provided through *Comment* and *Letters* is unique and important for fandom. Never give them up.

The current debate seems to have separated into two groups. Those who buy superhero titles and those who prefer alternative mature orientated books. These divisions are not only unnecessary but are also derisive and harmful to the comics community.

Can you imagine how outsiders view this petty bickering? The prejudiced view that comics are intended for and bought by nerdy rejected juveniles is only reinforced, making the world that fans inhabit seem insular, irrelevant and just plain weird.

Whatever content there is to this argument of "Mainstream versus Alternative" seems minor. The alternative group claim that superhero books are childish escapist power fantasies which take up far too much of the market. All this may be true, but if it is, it's because there is a definite and strong demand for this type of book, one which alternative comics sadly lack.

Indeed most independent comics fans start out reading superhero titles and change to alternative and mature comics once they feel they've outgrown power-fantasies. For all their trumpeting, alternative titles have failed to provide the medium with an influx of new consumers, and most fans still come via the mainstream.

Meanwhile, the mainstream majority does not help matters by being so openly hostile to the alternative crowd. Why this enmity? Surely they must realise that alternative comics are an important section of the industry — expanding its potential and its viability.

If we really want comics to be the medium it should be, how we all feel it could be — a strong media for the 21st Century — then we must stop squabbling and promote the industry, celebrating its diversity and embracing its uniqueness.

Because, at the moment, the industry is far too incestuous and introverted to attract anyone except those simply seeking the escapism such a self-contained world offers.

Andy Brewer, 58 Kingsley Crt
Salford M5 4EZ

ABOUT Alex Thomas's attack on Fabio Barbieri: I'm well aware that Fabio is perfectly able to defend himself, but I would like to say that although Fabio and I have had our disagreements, I know of no one who has written so passionately or eloquently about the merits of superhero comics as Fabio.

The man's love for comics simply radiates from every pore. To say his views are synonymous with fascism — cheap shot, Alex — is as ridiculous as it is uncalled for. Considering how enraged you were over Fabio's use of the word "fool" and **Zum!**'s castigation of fanboys, I would have expected you to chose your words more carefully. It would be wise to think long and hard before accusing anyone of fascism (which seems to have become a word bandied about far too readily nowadays, being used at the drop of a hat against anyone who expresses strong views which happen to differ with those of your own). Needless to say, if you honestly believe Fabio's listing of comics makes him a fascist, then I'm forced to say that "fool" would be putting it mildly.

Steve Holland
Lexden Road, Colchester

I'M OUTRAGED! How dare you imply that I'm poor and old. So I made a mistake. I defy you to spot a single error in my latest feature about the origin of Superman and how the dynamic duo of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created him in 1939. Or was it Jim Lee? I know it was an American guy anyway, and that's without even looking it up.

Mr Holland used to edit a nice magazine called ***Comic World****.*

The shock of its closure led to a slight memory lapse which in turn led to a short Movers item last issue. It's good to see he's recovered. Oh, and he thanks you for all the flowers and "get well soon" cards.

Paul Register
100 Upperthorpe, Sheffield

EVERY month when I read **Comics International**, I always end up wondering what all the fuss is about with regards to this Warren Ellis guy. When I speak of my favourite comic writers to comics reading friends, I

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invariably mention Neil Gaiman, Mark Waid and Scott Lobdell. They mention the likes of Dave Sim, Garth Ennis, Grant Morrison, Alan Moore and Bill Tucci. But none ever mention Warren Ellis.

So why do your reviewers find it necessary to foam at the mouth when reviewing one of his many books? Admittedly, the only books of his I've ever read are **Excalibur** and the **StarJammers** limited series, the latter of which was quite good, but wasn't any better than other **X-Men** mini-series of recent years, and the artwork of Carlos Pacheco had much to do with the success of **Starjammers**.

I am an unashamed **X-Men** fan. I buy all the monthly titles bar two. An X-book has to be pretty disappointing for me not to buy it.

For a start, I don't buy **Wolverine**. The reason is that while the characterisation of Logan is superb and often quite deep, the storylines are powder-puff at best. Larry Hama is a master at leaving dangling plot-threads, the end result is a rather unfulfilling read.

Excalibur is the other X-book I've just cancelled. The reason being that this book is almost the exact opposite of **Wolverine**, it has lots of good interesting stories, but the treatment of the characters in **Excalibur** is diabolical. Let me try and explain what I mean by this.

When Brit Warren Ellis first took over this book, I was quite pleased because I'd read good things about him (in **Comics International**, of course) and thought that he might be able to return the British feel of the book that it always had until Alan Davis left it.

But this just hasn't happened. The only characters that Mr Ellis seems to be interested in telling stories about are Nightcrawler, Shadowcat and his own creation, the Mulder-esque Pete Wisdom.

Captain Britain and Meggan are almost entirely unrecognisable from their Alan Davis counterparts; Douglock and DayTripper might as well not be in the book.

So, keeping all this in mind, do you think that **Comics International**'s reviewers could be a little bit more objective when reviewing **Excalibur** and other Ellis-written books in the future? I would argue that he is no better than all the other writers whose names have appeared in this letter. And I really do think that many others would agree with me.

Comics International has a strict non-interference policy on Reviews, any contributor gushing is sincere. Knowing and having worked with a lot of creators, I keep my hands off the entire section, so I don't unfairly bias the opinions printed. If the majority of reviews — by different people — are positive, this reflects the work and creator's popularity.

As a self-confessed X-Men purist, you sound like you prefer tradition over development, which is fine, it is your choice. But when comics are steeped in character history they invariably lack the flair of new approaches. Without change we wouldn't have had Miller's ***Daredevil****, Moore's* ***Swamp Thing****, Robinson's* ***Starman*** *or countless other leaps forward. Instead we'd be faced with such commercial failures as Thomas's* ***All Star Squadron****, Strazewski's* ***Justice Society*** *and the like. Reinventing characters, or focusing on personal favourites, is a writer's choice.*

However, I too wondered what the fuss over Warren Ellis was all about. As we're not worthy of any review copies from Marvel, I'd lost touch with many old favourites. But I bought Warren's ***Doctor Strange*** *and* ***Thor*** *titles, and thoroughly enjoyed them (short-lived though they were).*

Sadly, I find the ***X-Men*** *stories totally inpenetrable after an absence of several years and I doubt if anybody can win me back.*

But, to discover why the majority of reviewers — both ours and other magazines' — speak so highly of Warren's prolific work, perhaps you really should try a wider range of his comics before being so quick to condemn. *Dez*

D. R. Booth
Goodison, Liverpool 10

I'M sorry if I accused the alternative press of brow-beating us with endless recommendations. I just thought it might be nice to see a few positive comments about mainstream-superhero comics.

Comics International is not a place to air people's dirty laundry, nor is it a place for name-calling. I chose not to respond to my original comment because I felt that maybe I hadn't taken enough care or thought when writing it. How about we call it a draw?

Andrew Harvey
Leytonstone, London E10

I'VE been thinking about the current plight of comics retailers with the ever-changing demands made on them. So I thought I'd share it with your readers, in case somebody somewhere has an answer...

Given the non-returnable nature of the business, every unsold eats into a retailer's profits. So, in the case of the new Amalgam week, just how do they do it?

Try this example... Let's say you're a retailer and can sell 100 of each **Wolverine**, and 50 of each **Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight**. So how many copies of the Wolverine-Batman comic **Dark Claw** do you order? 150 because both groups will want it? 100 because only the X-completists will be bothered? Or 50 because only Batman readers can afford yet another comic? Or what..?

If Marvel and DC are not putting out their usual range during the Amalgam week, retailers will only have these 12 titles to cover the same overheads as the normal 50 or so. If they get their figures wrong, it could be disastrous. So, come on, how are they supposed to do it? And is it fair for them to do all this brain-straining just for one week's books? Aren't the publishers taking the mickey a little here at the expense of their main source of income? I'd appreciate any input...

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Trading cards wanted: *Simpsons 2* D4 A2 A3 A4; *1962 Topps Football* 434. Please contact I. Ramadi, 116 The Ridgeway, Kingsbury, London NW9 0UG.

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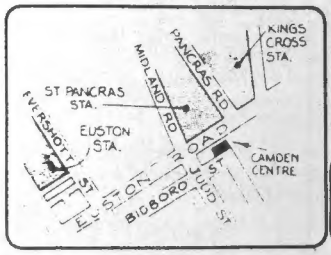
The Comicbook Marketplace is held five times a year at the Camden Centre and is just a few minutes walk from Kings Cross, St. Pancras and Euston stations.

There are more than ninety tables wiyh over 200,000 comicbooks, magazines and trading cards on sale, including S.F., fantasy, film and T.V. related items, from Britain's top dealers.

Sandwiches, snacks, and hot and cold drinks are available throughout the day from the refreashment area located in the dealers room.

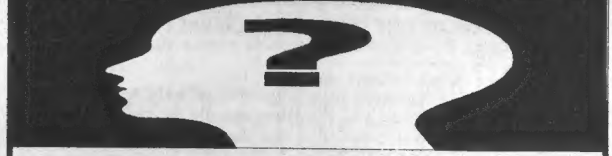
How to get there:
Bus: 10, 17, 30, 45, 46, 63, 73, 91, 214, 259 or 359 to Kings Cross or Camden Town Hall.
Underground: Circle, Metropolitan, Piccadilly or Victoria Line to Kings Cross.

DOORS OPEN MID-DAY
ADMISSION FREE



COMICBOOK MARKETPLACE DATES FOR 1996:
APRIL 21ST, JUNE 9TH,
AUGUST 25TH, NOVEMBER 17TH.

STOP!!!



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Comic Book Retail Agreement

CoBRA

Mail Order Protection Scheme

With the increasing audience for buying comics by post, reputable organisations risk suffering because of any unsatisfactory mail order transaction new readers of this magazine may have had elsewhere.

To reassure readers, **Comics International** has instigated a Mail Order Code of Practice, with participating businesses displaying the above logo in their advertisements, lists and catalogues.

CoBRA Mail Order Protection Scheme Code of Practice

Advertisers:

i Advertisers will state in print their standard despatch period for published goods, which will be within 28 days of receipt of payment.

ii In the event of items having sold out, customers will be offered a full cash refund for these goods.

iii In the event that goods are received by purchaser in unsatisfactory condition due to bad grading or poor wrapping, vendor agrees to provide acceptable replacement copies or full refund including the return postage costs incurred by purchaser.

iv Where required, an independent panel will judge whether goods in question are below advertised standards of grading.

v Where a PO Box address and trading name (other than limited company or PLC) is used by advertiser, the true name or business name (as appropriate) of the advertiser together with full address and telephone number must be submitted to **Comics International** with advertising copy, or the advertisement will not be accepted.

vi Vendor vouches that all goods detailed in advertisements, lists and catalogues which carry the **CoBRA MOPS** seal are graded as accurately as possible and no defect is intentionally overlooked.

vii Any mail order organisation subsequently failing, under investigation, to abide by this code understands upon joining that its name will be published as no longer connected with the CoBRA Mail Order Code of Practice scheme.

CUSTOMERS:

i In the event that goods ordered and paid for are not received within the advertiser's published fulfilment period, customer will notify advertiser in writing that goods have not been received and that unless a satisfactory response in writing is forthcoming, they will pursue their claim through CoBRA within 7 days.

ii It is recommended that mail order buyers should always retain dated copies of all correspondence and payment records, in the event of any query, and that customers contacting the **CoBRA MOPS** (Mail Order Protection Scheme) send additional copies of any relevant correspondence with their letters.

iii Customers are reminded that a standard of 28 days fulfilment is the accepted norm to allow for any outside delays in the mail routing of customers letter, together with banking time for clearance of payment and/or delays in transit for goods supplied. Collectively, these factors can add 15 days to fulfilment time.

iv Customers are also reminded that many mail order businesses do not have sufficient staff to allow for fulfilment of orders during vacations or stock-purchasing visits overseas, but vendors should notify customers of such occasions.

v When paying for a list or catalogue, customers are reminded that a delay may occur when vendor is either preparing a new list or catalogue, or when current one is considered too dated to be of benefit to would-be purchaser. Vendor guarantees that new list or catalogue will be sent upon completion, which will be within 2 months of advertisement being published.

vi CoBRA cannot adjudicate over well-protected goods damaged by postal authorities, but a claim can be made by both vendor and purchaser against the assigned carrier.

Mail Order Retailers: If you agree to abide by the above conditions and wish to add a **CoBRA MOPS** symbol to your advertisements and catalogues, please submit your trading name and address with full name, personal address and telephone number of your business's proprietor with a first year annual subscription fee of £5.00 to cover administration costs (made payable to *Comics International, CoBRA account*) to:

CoBRA c/o COMICS INTERNATIONAL
8 Trinity Road, London N2 8JJ

The **CoBRA MOPS** agreement abides by the Advertising Standards Authority's Code of Mail Order Advertising Practice

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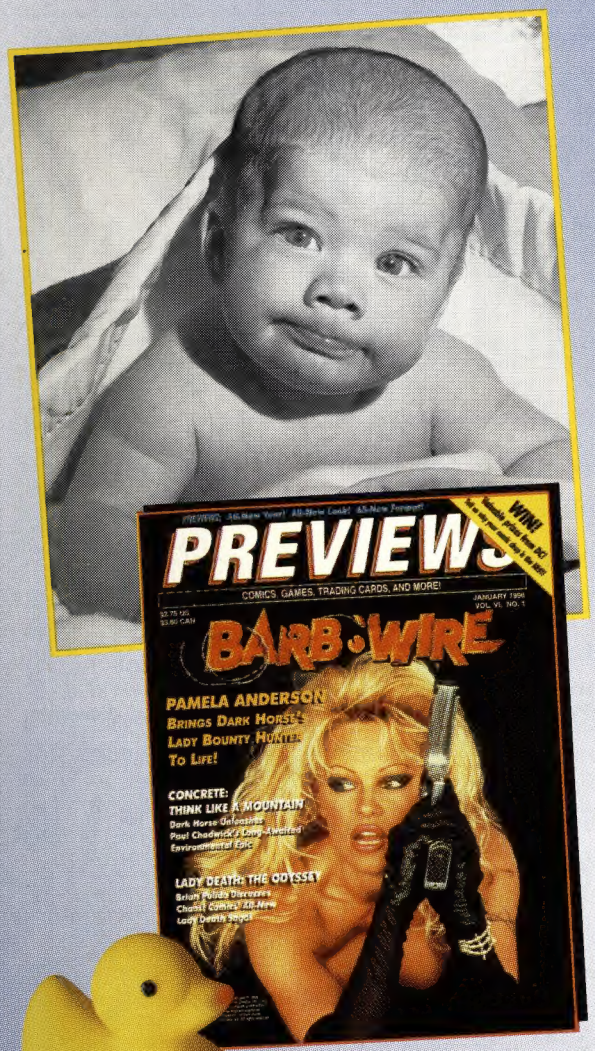

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